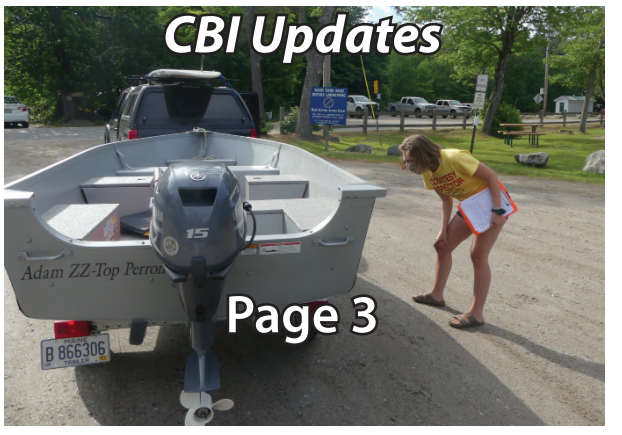

LEA Lake News

Free

A Publication of the Lakes Environmental Association
Protecting Maine Lakes Since 1970

Fall 2020 – Winter 2021

Protecting the Outdoors...From Us!

by Alanna Doughty

I feel incredibly fortunate to live in a place where I can walk out my back door and into the woods, a place where I don't have very far to go to be in the embrace of the natural world. I have always felt this way, and I have always valued nature and worked to protect it. It is no mistake that I now share my passion for the outdoors as an educator at LEA.

Because of COVID-19, there was a massive shift in what we feel we can do safely and this led to an increase in outdoor activity for many people. Although this may be one of the silver linings from the pandemic, the explosion of use in our outdoor community spaces has come with some unwanted baggage.

This past year, the White Mountain National Forest was greatly impacted by increased traffic at almost every access point. The Forest Service struggled to manage a surge in trash, human waste, and graffiti along the trails. They had to oversee trail closures and re-openings in the spring, as well as the incredible influx of users. Our friends at Loon Echo Land Trust experienced similar problems closer to home on Pleasant Mountain. And if anyone is used to boating in the area, you likely noticed a substantial uptick in traffic out on the water. This was especially true on Long Lake this past summer and reports of boaters defecating in the water and on the shore were unprecedented. Gross!

In an August New Hampshire NPR story, Tiffany Benna from the U.S. Forest Service said, "We have a lot of what we would maybe consider 'new users' to the forest that maybe aren't prepared to come to a place that has limited facilities... there aren't bathrooms everywhere, there isn't trash pickup, and so these folks need to pack it in, pack it out, and that includes burying or packing out human waste. These are first time visitors to the forest who just don't know what's expected of them."

I was lucky enough to be introduced to the outdoors as a young child, toddling behind my grandfather's quiet steps through the woods. As a life-long hunter who valued the animals and their habitats, he loved seeing and sharing them with me and teaching me how to move through the woods. He protected the spaces that the animals called home and taught me to leave nothing behind. Later, my indoctrination continued as a student in Alaska, and then as an instructor in Outward Bound, where the seven principles of Leave No Trace were shared and upheld. I firmly believe that we are seeing the disregard for these outdoor spaces not because people don't care, but because they are completely unfamiliar with them. We've become a generation who doesn't know how to be outside. How terrifyingly sad.

It is the connection to nature that drives the caring and protection of it. The key to this is getting

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LEA's Alanna Doughty teaching outdoor eduction during the 2020 pandemic

Thank You, Members!

Dear Members and Friends,

Our 50th year has turned out to be the most challenging in our long history, but I am happy to report that the Lakes Environmental Association remains strong and active. As the COVID-19 pandemic developed this spring, many businesses were forced to close or pull back on their activities. By contrast, activity on the lakes went way up. Fortunately, courtesy boat inspection was deemed an essential service and we were out in full force. By mid-May, our boat inspectors were seeing the kind of traffic that they usually see in July.

Our milfoil control program, which extends from Long Lake into Sebago Lake, greatly expanded this year with a new boat and five teams of divers. We also built a beautiful new garage at the Maine Lake Science Center for storing boats and equipment. We held our first ever virtual Paddle Battle on Highland Lake, which was a big success. Over the summer, our staff swelled to 60, including boat inspectors, milfoil divers, and lab and water testing interns.

This allowed us to provide much needed jobs for young people, senior citizens, and others looking for temporary work in the fulfillment of

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Inside

Woodland Owner Appreciation Day 2020

by Alanna Doughty

Maintaining forested watersheds is so important to water quality that we've started a tradition of thanking those landowners who are keeping their lands wooded. This is important because the forest is a natural sponge that filters and cleans the water that enters our lakes and ponds. But as more land in this area is developed, our forested spaces are shrinking. The biggest issue with development is an increase in impermeable surfaces (like roofs and pavement) that water runs off of, collecting pollutants and soil as it rushes toward our waterbodies. With thoughtful planning, some land can be developed with minimal impact on water quality. However, some land is more sensitive to development because of its proximity to existing waterbodies, the soils on the site, and the topography. Preserving or protecting these sensitive areas is essential to maintaining high water quality in our region. But how do we connect with landowners and share this urgent message of watershed protection?

In 2018, LEA first partnered with Portland Water District and several other organizations and agencies to host an event to thank property owners who own and maintain large tracts of forested land. The event was held at Loon Echo Land Trust's "Crooked River Forest at Intervale" near Scribner's Mills. It was an opportunity for partners in the watershed to thank woodland owners for keeping their forests intact, find out what they needed, and share resources. In 2019, LEA took on a larger role and hosted the event at the Highland Research Forest and renamed it "Woodland Owner Appreciation Day". We had over 45 participants who toured the woods and heard about managing land for sustainable income, managing for wildlife, and legacy and estate planning.

This year amidst COVID-19 regulations, we reduced the number of allowed attendees and ran a physically-distant event with partners and 30 participants. Foresters and biologists joined us from Maine Audubon, Maine Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, Maine Forest Service, Maine Tree Farm Association, Portland Water District, Loon Echo Land Trust, Sebago Clean Waters, Western Foothills Land Trust, Maine Woodland Owners, and consulting foresters Jessie Duplin and Paul Larrivee. Everyone received a forest-themed mask to wear, their own metal water bottle, a boxed lunch and (if they wanted) a beer at the end, brewed with Sebago Lake water from Allagash and Rising Tide breweries. In short, we had an incredible day at Roger Lowell's tree farm in Bridgton. Seeing and interacting with people in person instead of on screen was rewarding, as was the beautiful, warm, late-summer day. Being around a community of folks who value our water, wildlife, and way of life is always refreshing!

This day allowed us to celebrate some of our watershed woodland owners and also showed us that we could safely hold a public event with masks, distancing, and more hand sanitizer than we knew what to do with. We will soon begin to offer socially distanced public walks, and will continue through winter if we are able to. Look for next year's Woodland Owner Appreciation Day to occur again in the late summer or early fall, and we hope you can join us to learn more about protecting our water, wildlife, and way of life.

If you're interested in learning more about the event or connecting with any of the professionals who attended, please check out the Woodland Owner Appreciation Day page on our website at mainelakes.org or visit sebagocleanwaters.org, which is a coalition of organizations (including LEA) working to protect the upper watershed of Sebago Lake for future generations.

Sally Stockwell holding feathers from a northern flicker and talking about forestry

WOAD host Roger Lowell talking about multiple uses of his woods and fields, and the importance of public access

Roger has helped develop an extensive cross-country ski trail from the Highland Golf course to the Highland Research Forest

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Sustainable timber management keeps watersheds forested and lakes clean.

LEA's 2020 Courtesy Boat Inspection Season

by Mary Jewett

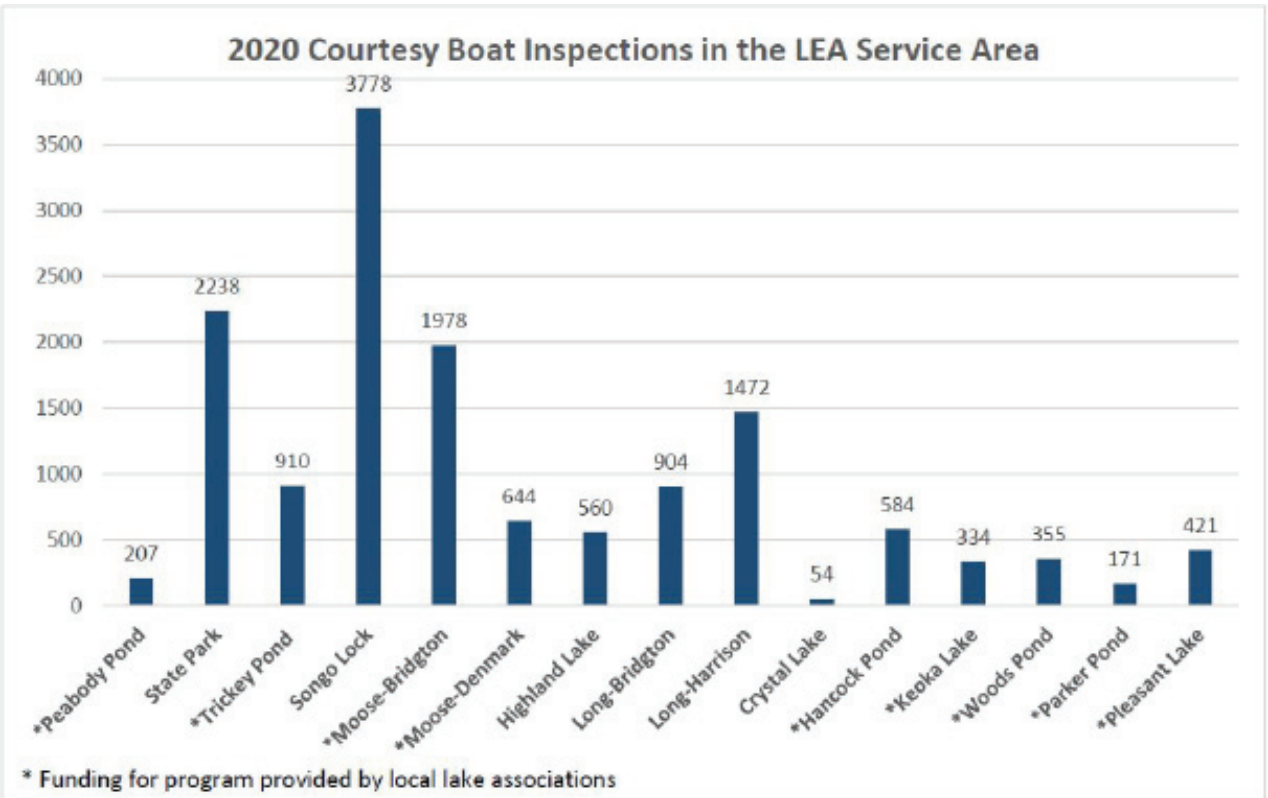
As you are probably aware, this summer felt like the Lakes Region was the boating capital of the world, a sentiment shared by almost every small community in the state. With the increased boat traffic on our lakes came the heightened anxiety about the spread of invasive species. This fear was not unwarranted. The increased traffic, coupled with a very warm and sunny growing season, absolutely led to more plant growth and more movement of invasive aquatic plants.

In the 2020 CBI season, LEA collaborated with seven local lake associations to employ 35 inspectors, who worked over 1100 shifts and conducted almost 15,000 inspections at 14 boat ramps. Our inspection numbers were about 10% higher than last year, creating a stressful season in the age of COVID-19. To minimize exposure to the virus, inspectors were expected to wear masks when interacting with boaters, remain six feet away from others at the launches, and avoid physical contact with boats and equipment when possible. There were negative responses from some of the boating public about these requirements, but the overwhelming majority showed appreciation that the inspection program was moving forward and that we took precautions to reduce risk for everyone.

We made a couple of unfortunate discoveries this summer in our service area. The first was a large patch of variable milfoil at the north end of Long Lake in Harrison. While not totally out of the blue, it was disappointing to find this patch so far from other infestations to the south. The good news is that, within a week, the LEA invasive control team was on the scene, covering and removing the milfoil to make sure the area was clear for the summer. Surveys of this site will be done for the next several years to make sure this infestation does not come back or spread.

The second discovery was a resurgence of variable milfoil growth around the boat launch at Sebago Lake State Park. Inspectors there reported sightings of milfoil floating around the ramp and leaving the lake on boats. Once again, the LEA plant crew came to the rescue by clearing up new patches found near the ramp. Within a couple of weeks, thanks to our divers, inspectors reported no invasive plant fragments anywhere near the launch.

Last but not least, on the 4th of July, CBI Jaden Poulin, while working at the Denmark end of Moose Pond, discovered a fragment of variable milfoil on a pontoon boat and removed it. The boat had come from an area of Sebago Lake known for heavy infestations of this invasive plant. This "save" was confirmation of how vital the CBI program is to our lakes.



Past LEA executive director Peter Lowell taking some time off from retirement to help keep the Stevens Brook Trail in good shape

Thank you for keeping LEA going

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our mission. Our educators, Mary and Alanna, spent the summer refining their methods for connecting virtually with our members and the roughly 1000 school children we serve each year. Now that school is back in session, they are adjusting the curriculum to increased outdoor and remote learning.

We owe a debt of gratitude to you, our supporters, who have kept us financially stable through these uncertain times. We are also grateful to our exceptionally dedicated staff who went above and beyond expectations to keep our programs running. Knowing the community is behind us in our work inspires us to focus on our mission of preserving the lakes for future generations, even in times of challenge.

Thank you for your generosity. Please be sure to renew your membership annually. We rely on you!

Best,

Lydia Landesberg

LEA Board President

Introducing Grace

Grace Olsen is the newest addition to the LEA staff, serving as the organization's Planning and Outreach Coordinator. Grace grew up in the small coastal town of Rockport before heading off to Green Mountain College in rural Vermont. While at Green Mountain College she enjoyed many outdoor and environmentally geared courses that extended her passion for environmental work and was particularly interested in ecological design and permaculture. For her senior year, she transferred to the University of Southern Maine to study environmental science and policy. Grace has done work in environmental education, outreach, and watershed protection in the past and is thrilled to continue to help preserve and protect Maine's waterways with LEA!

Grace dove into her position by reviewing site plan applications in the surrounding towns pertaining to the health of our lakes and waterways, including erosion control measures, stormwater management, and compliance with municipal regulations and comprehensive plans. Grace has also been working with the Maine Stream Habitat Viewer and subsequent sources to identify water quality impacts and fish connectivity issues associated with stream crossings (culverts under roads and bridges). Grace also laid out and formatted this newsletter and created this issue's "Rain Drain" on page 14. Welcome on board Grace!

ABIOTIC is the hardest solution in the crossword...

Fall 2020 Milfoil Update:

LEA's Milfoil Control Work Expands in All Directions

The 2020 season was unlike any other for LEA's control team. We fielded five teams with a total of 20 divers, upgraded and repaired a third harvesting boat, expanded our service area into the Northwest River in Sebago, and made great progress in our other control locations. We accomplished all of these tasks despite a late start to the season due to the ongoing pandemic. Here's a look into the major areas our crew worked this summer.

Long Lake: Like most infested waters this season, Long Lake saw substantial regrowth in areas that have been infested in the past. Our crew conducted two complete surveys of the Long Lake shoreline this season and extensively harvested in Mast Cove and near Salmon Point. These locations have consistent but scattered growth that have been substantially thinned due to control efforts in the past. The discovery of four previously unknown infested areas along the eastern shore, including the Harrison public boat launch, was especially concerning this season. Thanks to the quick response of our team, the areas were addressed before they were allowed to spread. We finished out the season revisiting those newly-discovered areas and made sure there was no further growth.

Variable milfoil in Sebago Lake

Songo River and Brandy Pond: The many bends and shallow areas of the Songo River make for an ideal place for milfoil to grow. Combined with frequent boat traffic, this waterway could cause milfoil to spread to many new places if left alone. Our crew has made great progress this year, completing two entire passes up and down the river and managing to pull more than 730 large bags of milfoil in the process. A sizable infestation near the state park boat launch took root this year, but thanks to an early report from the Courtesy Boat Inspection program, the infestation was harvested and covered over with benthic barriers before it had a chance to spread. Some minor growth still persists in the coves of the river, but these locations are difficult to reach and very rarely travelled. Next year, our crew will remove the benthic barriers near the state park launch to determine the condition of the infestation and move toward surveying the river for any signs of regrowth.

Brandy Pond continues to remain primarily free of invasives with only a minor amount of regrowth in known infested areas. Plants in these problem spots were removed and regularly checked on throughout the season.

Sebago Cove: Unlike seasons in the past, LEA was able to field a full-time crew dedicated to Sebago Cove this year. Our team continued with the same strategy from last year, focusing our efforts on the high traffic areas of the cove, such as the main channel and around docks and mooring areas. After removing nearly 500 large bags of milfoil from the cove and placing almost 70 large benthic barriers over dense patches, we are proud of the progress we have made this year. Despite the Herculean efforts of our dedicated crew, the infestation remains one of the worst in the

Our milfoil crew working in Sebago Lake's Northwest River

area and will continue to require significant resources to manage. We believe that with persistent efforts and adequate funding, the infestation in Sebago Cove can be contained and eventually controlled.

Sebago Lake's Northwest River Cove: The Northwest River Cove is a popular access point to Sebago Lake for many residents and visitors alike. Unfortunately, it is also home to one of the densest milfoil infestations in the area. The residents living in this cove have long recognized the potential impact that this aggressive invader can have if allowed to spread and have often contacted LEA with pleas for assistance in combating the growing problem. Until this season, LEA has been unable to provide assistance because of limited resources. However, thanks to a generous donation from the Bingham Foundation, we expanded our operations and fielded a full harvesting team dedicated to working in the Northwest River. This new team, led by veteran crew leader Lucien Sulloway, was outfitted with a newly-repaired and upgraded harvesting system. The crew hit the ground running, quickly surveying the area and establishing a milfoil-free corridor to allow boaters to travel through the area without running the risk of contributing to the spread of milfoil.

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An area cleared of milfoil

Lucien & Quinn surface while Tyler collects fragments

LEA diver pulling milfoil

Cold-Blooded Biodiversity at our Preserves

by Alanna Doughty

It is no surprise, but the large and beautiful animals are the ones that seem to get all the attention. When these species are in trouble, people take notice and take action.

When bald eagle populations plummeted, new laws and regulations were enacted to protect this iconic bird. Because of these actions, the bald eagle was eventually removed from the endangered species list. Our magnificent loons faced similar troubles in the past, and we humans again took steps to help these birds (some of which are still happening – like the elimination of lead sinkers), and the population has rebounded.

But what about the smaller critters that are not on our money, our mailboxes, and our state flags? What about the cold-blooded creatures that slink along the forest floor? What about our frogs and salamanders, snakes, and turtles? Are these animals somehow less important?

Reptiles and amphibians have several traits that make them more sensitive to change, compared to other vertebrates. They don't move very far, they need both terrestrial and aquatic habitats, they don't often have a high number of surviving offspring, and it can take them several years to mature. Additionally, amphibians have a permeable skin that makes them especially vulnerable to pollution, elevated temperatures, and UV radiation. Because of these traits, half of our Maine reptile species are listed as endangered, threatened, or of special concern. In addition, the bulk of these species are concentrated in southern Maine, where the impacts and threats from humans are the greatest. These threats include habitat loss and fragmentation due to development, water pollution, predation by pets, road traffic, and illegal collecting. These issues are not unique to Maine. Unfortunately, 32% of the world's amphibian species are currently considered threatened by extinction.

In 1986, the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIFW) launched a cooperative project with Maine Audubon and the University of Maine called the Maine Amphibian and Reptile Atlasing Project (MARAP). This project and the work of MDIFW biologists contribute to what we know today about the distribution and biology of our 39 species of amphibians and reptiles in Maine. There is still much to learn about these special creatures in Maine's biologically diverse landscape and how we can best preserve them.

Today, with the help of volunteers and a smartphone app called iNaturalist, MDIFW is gathering data from many sources to determine species' range and note important changes. Using the app is an easy way for anyone to contribute needed information about these species. If you are interested, check out iNaturalist to learn more. In addition to MARAP, MDIFW has actively researched the distribution and population status of Blanding's (endangered) and Spotted (threatened) turtles in Maine.

This spring and summer, LEA went into the field with MDIFW to conduct a turtle survey at our Holt Pond Preserve. We set up and checked 20 turtle traps every day for 12 days (with a new survey partner every day that included volunteers, interns, and staff). We contributed data to MDIFW, iNaturalist, and an eastern United States turtle range and genetics project. Later in the summer we trapped at Willett Brook for a rapid 4-day assessment based on a Blanding's Turtle sighting (none were located). Next year, we plan to work with MDIFW to survey vernal pools and the wetland complex at the Highland Research Forest. If you would like to help monitor these species, please let us know by contacting Alanna@mainelakes.org.

Young snapping turtle at the Holt Pond Preserve

Fall 2020 Milfoil Update

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Throughout the remainder of the season, the crew worked toward the middle of the cove area from two directions, focusing on the boat launch, the private marina, and the residential areas near the river's output into Sebago Lake. After pulling close to a thousand large bags of milfoil and laying over 90 benthic barriers, our first season in this small cove comes to a close with tremendous progress.

Frye Island and Kettle Cove: The two major marinas on Frye Island were surveyed and harvested early in the season by another mobile surveying crew. Control efforts from previous years have significantly reduced the infestations in these two marinas to a relatively small number of scattered individual plants. A late season survey visit confirmed that Frye Island's milfoil infestation was well under control.

Although conditions for growing milfoil are ideal in Kettle Cove, repeated surveying throughout the season revealed a very small amount of individual plants. Our crew plans to continue monitoring the area to prevent any further spread.

LEA would like to thank everyone who made this season possible and kept our vital program running smoothly, despite the wide-reaching impacts of COVID-19. Our passionate and hard-working crew, the experienced crew leaders who strived to meet objectives and exceed expectations, and the members of LEA who provide funding is what makes this work successful.

If you are not already a member of LEA and you would like to support the milfoil control efforts in your area, please consider donating and becoming a member today. LEA is an extension of the community's desire to protect our beautiful, natural lakes, and we cannot achieve that goal without your support.

LEA milfoil crew working in Sebago Cove

LEA's Work to Control Milfoil and Improve Water Quality Boosted by Federal Grant

A few years ago, a group of eight conservation organizations and the Portland Water District formed Sebago Clean Waters (SCW), an initiative to protect the Sebago Lake watershed through forest conservation and stewardship. In an effort to ramp up the pace of conservation and make other water quality improvements in the watershed, this collaborative — which includes LEA — applied for an $8 million grant this year from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Recently, we received the fantastic news that SCW was awarded the $8 million grant, which will allow partners to leverage another $10.5 million from public and private sources. The coalition, with Portland Water District as the lead partner, received the full requested amount, which was the second largest of the ten grants awarded through the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service. Over the five years that this project will run, the bulk of the funding will go toward obtaining conservation easements on high-priority lands that drain to Sebago Lake, with the goal of conserving 10,000 acres of forestland. This critical work will be done by SCW land trust partners Western Foothills and Loon Echo in close collaboration with other SCW partners.

One of the aspects that made the grant application more appealing to the USDA was the multi-prong approach to protecting water quality. This is

Iceboat racing on Jordan Bay - photo by Patrick Keeley

where LEA comes in. Our portion of the project will include expanding our efforts to control invasive milfoil in Sebago Lake and upgrading stream and culvert crossings to reduce flooding and erosion and improve fish passage.

Sebago Lake is known for its extremely clear and clean water. The water is so pure that it doesn't need to be filtered before treatment. More than 200,000 water users in southern Maine rely on this pristine natural resource. One of the reasons the water is so clean is because the Sebago Lake watershed is 84% forested and forests filter water naturally.

The watershed, which is all the land that drains to Sebago Lake, includes more than a dozen towns, all of Naples and Harrison, and most of the land in Waterford and Bridgton. It spans 234,000 acres along the lake's major tributary, the Crooked River, all the way up into Bethel, and is primarily undeveloped. Because the majority of this land is privately-owned, it is at risk of development, which can contribute to water quality decline. This is why it's important that we, in conjunction with our SCW partners, are taking steps now to do what we can to keep the watershed healthy.

The work LEA can accomplish as a result of this grant is a win for both water consumers in the Portland area and landowners and residents in the Lake Region. If you know of a road/stream crossing that needs improvement or would like to find out more about land conservation opportunities in the Sebago Lake watershed, please contact our Main Street office at 207-647-8580. You can learn more about the work of SCW at sebagocleanwaters.org.

LEA's Connection to Sebago Lake

by Paul Hunt, PWD Environmental Service Manager

Portland Water District (PWD) has been providing drinking water to Greater Portland since 1908. As the population of the area has grown, so has the number of communities and people drinking water from the lake. Today about 200,000 Mainers in 11 cities and towns drink Sebago Lake water every day. There are also many iconic Maine businesses that use water from the lake including B&M Foods, Oakhurst and Hood dairies, Idexx Laboratories, Allagash, Geary's and Rising Tide Breweries, and Coffee By Design, to name just a few. Add to those numbers the many thousands of people who enjoy Sebago Lake for boating, fishing and swimming, or live in a house near it, and you start to get a sense for just how important the lake is to the lives of so many people in southern Maine.

So what does this have to do with the Lakes Environmental Association?

When it rains, water flows into Sebago Lake from an area that stretches from Bethel in the north to Standish in the south. This land area, known as the Sebago Lake watershed, is crisscrossed by many rivers and streams that carry the water on its journey to Sebago Lake and is also dotted by several dozen lakes and ponds. There are so many beautiful lakes – each a treasure itself – that Mainers took to calling this area the Lake Region. If you look at a map, you can trace the many paths water can take as it makes its way through the watershed, flows into one lake, leaves that lake and flows to another and sometimes a third and fourth lake before finally reaching Sebago Lake. For example, water flows from Highland Lake in Bridgton to Long Lake, then into and out of Brandy Pond via the Songo River. The Songo River eventually empties into the Crooked River which finally flows into Sebago Lake.

It's this connectivity that makes the lakes of the Lake Region key to the water quality of Sebago Lake. If these lakes are clean, then Sebago will be clean, too. Conversely, if they decline in quality, then eventually, Sebago Lake will, too.

This is where LEA comes in. Everything LEA does, from monitoring to erosion control to invasive plant removal, helps to protect the many lakes of this area. Because most of these lakes are connected to Sebago Lake, LEA's work is critical to the long-term protection of the Greater Portland water supply. So critical, in fact, the PWD and LEA have been partners for decades – sharing expertise and working in concert to protect the waters of the region.

One hundred years from now either the Lake Region lakes AND Sebago Lake will still be clean and clear or both will have declined and everyone will be the worse off for it. Every day, PWD and LEA work together to ensure the first of these scenarios comes to pass.

Fall Colors on Sebago Lake - photo by Brie Holme

Developed land exports 5-10 times as much phosphorus as forestland.

New Garage and Parking area at the Maine Lake Science Center

Our new garage and the expanded parking at the Maine Lake Science Center were funded by a grant from an anonymous family foundation. Site work for both projects was done by Warren Excavation, the garage foundation was donated by Henry's Concrete **(thank you, Henry!)**, framing, building and carpentry was provided by Sterling Sherman, and lights and power were put in by Western Maine Electric. Painting was all done by volunteers. **Thank you, painters!** The garage was sorely needed to store boats, buoys, equipment and our truck and is a fine addition to the grounds and is superbly built. The new parking lot at the end of the MLSC driveway could not have come at a better time – as the Pinehaven Trail at the Science Center has been packed with hikers and visitors all this year. The extra parking is a wonderful addition to the Center and provides better access to our trails and the trails of abutting Pondicherry Park.

Local Boy Scouts help paint boards for the new garage

The finished new garage!

Sterling Sherman takes a break from framing the garage to pose for a picture.

Protecting the Outdoors... from us!

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folks outside and building that relationship. If it isn't happening with Grandpa, maybe LEA can help fill this vital role. Of course, there will always be more to do, so please share nature with your children and grandchildren. You don't need all the answers, you just need to go there and start exploring (just remember to pack it out!).

Whether it be via video, trail work at the preserves, or virtual field trips and lessons for students, LEA will continue to share our love and stewardship of the outdoors. With the help of grant funding from the Casco Bay Estuary Partnership, we are creating full online lessons with video content, Google Earth tours, and meeting students and teachers outside when we can.

One very exciting thing about creating video content is that we can share it with teachers across Maine and beyond, increasing our educational reach and message like never before. And although videos are a great first step, the next step is to really spend some time outdoors. Anyone can build a connection to the outdoors, and it is even better to share this connection with your family and close friends. All you need to do is go outside! But dress accordingly, bring food (snacks make all adventures better), and bring it all back home when you are done. If you want some pointers first, check out our videos on YouTube. I hope to see you outside soon, where we can share a connection with each other and the space around us!

A young ecologist holds a painted turtle at the Holt Pond Preserve

Stormy Weather: Impact of Hurricane Isaias on LEA lakes

by Ben Peierls

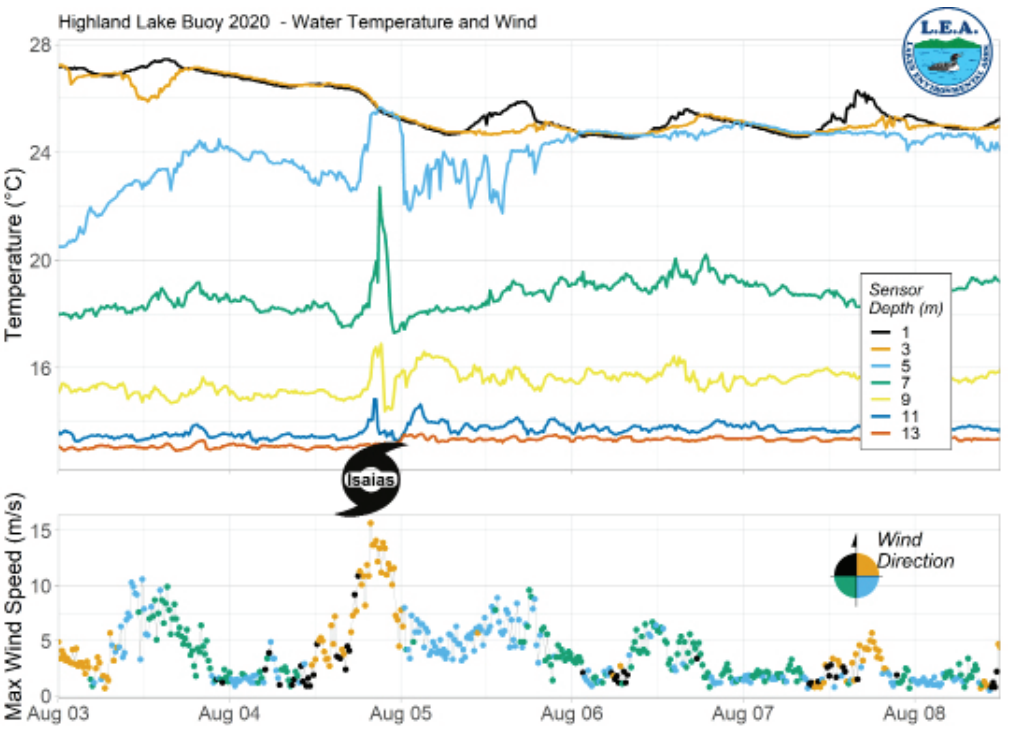
Maine is accustomed to weathering storms that bring high winds (think nor'easters), but not usually in the summer. Early August 2020, we had a drive-by from Hurricane Isaias. Even though the storm had lost strength as it moved through New York and Vermont, strong winds pummeled our area for several hours.

Our two automated buoys on Highland Lake and Long Lake captured the event, both from above and below the waterline. The figure below illustrates the water temperature and wind measurements made by the Highland buoy. The top panel shows water temperatures measured at seven different depths every 15 minutes and the bottom panel shows maximum wind speed and wind direction at the same time.

Before the storm, the lake was strongly stratified (layered) with the warmest water in the top 3 meters (~10 feet) and the coldest water at the bottom. On the evening of August 4th, strong north winds (up to 15 m/s or 33 mph) pushed lake surface water toward the south, forcing warm water downward as shown by the rapid increase in temperature at all depths except the bottom.

By the morning of August 5th, the winds had relaxed some and shifted to the south, causing lake water to rock back the other way and deep water to cool down again. By the end of the day, the warm upper layer was now deeper than before (notice how temperatures from 1 to 5 meters were the same), a precursor to the annual fall mixing event (i.e., lake turnover).

Since the dog days of August were not over, the effect appeared to be short-lived and the water remained warm and stable. However, we will be looking through our water quality data to see if the storm had other impacts. We will also look for the storm signal in the HOBO temperature logger data to see how widespread the storm effect was. Stay tuned!



Ben removing the Highland Lake buoy

Microplastics in our lakes

by Maggie Welch

Last year, LEA collaborated with St. Joseph's College in Standish to look for microplastics in surface waters at 13 locations within LEA's service area and found microplastics in 10 of those locations. Galvanized by this observation, LEA looked for microplastics at specific depths throughout the water column of one waterbody, Keoka Lake, over this past summer.

Microplastics are small pieces of plastic less than 5mm in diameter, which can be defined in two ways, based on origin. Primary microplastics are manufactured for use in industrial and personal care products. Secondary microplastics are formed when larger plastics break down, leaving tiny bits of plastic in the environment. Often, stormwater, effluent from industrial waste, and septic systems will wash microplastics into waterways. Microplastics also enter waterways as bottles, trash, or other plastic items dropped into a waterbody, which, over time, breakdown.

Microplastics are a hazard to marine and freshwater organisms throughout the food chain. Filter feeding and herbivorous (plant-eating) organisms will consume microplastics at the expense of actual nutrition, while predacious organisms will consume prey that have eaten microplastics, leading to a loss of nutrition for these animals as well. Microplastics are widely known to be a problem in marine environments; however, much less is known about their presence in and impacts on freshwater environments.

Our findings in Keoka Lake, which is nestled in the hills of Waterford, were alarming. Microplastics were in all levels of the water column. Interestingly, the highest concentrations were found in surface waters close to shore and in waters in and above the thermocline (the region of rapidly changing water temperature and pressure). While 2019's multi-lake study and 2020's multi-depth study were limited in scope, this work confirms the presence of microplastics in our waters. This information will be used to develop future studies to explore the extent of this pollutant and the impact they may be having in this area's lakes and ponds.

Microplastics often enter waterways as large plastic items. Over time and exposure to environmental factors, these items break down, leaving microplastics in the water.

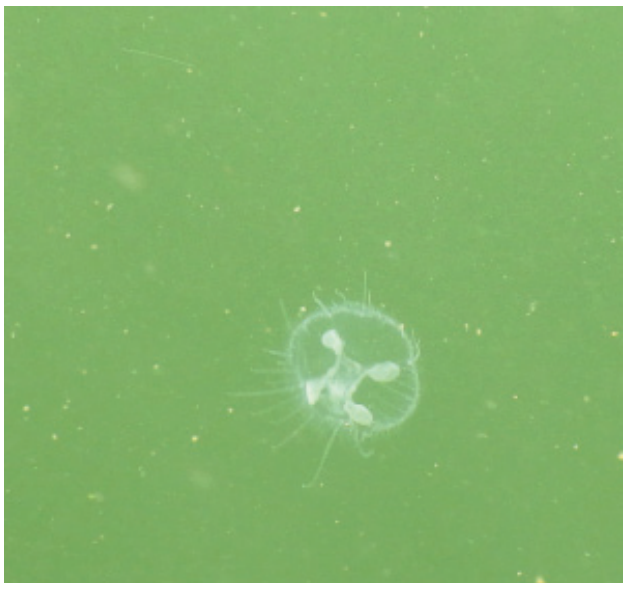
Thank you for supporting our work and mission!

Water Monitoring by the Numbers!

367: total phosphorus samples taken from lakes

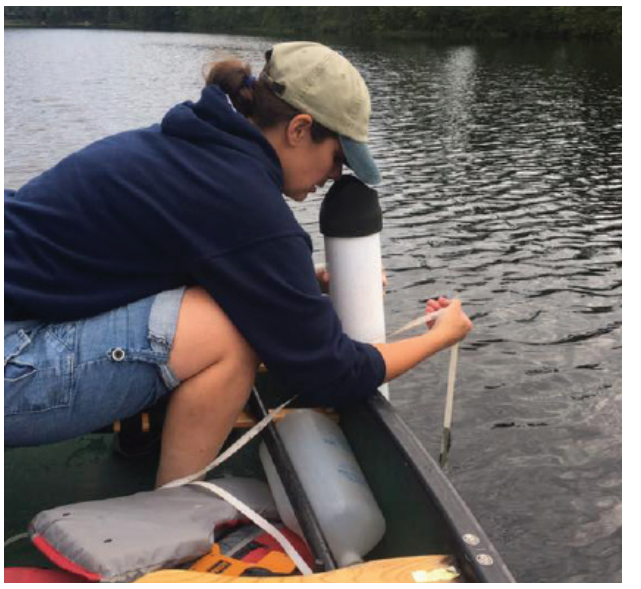
256: total chlorophyll–*a* samples taken from lakes

3: the number of snapping turtle encounters

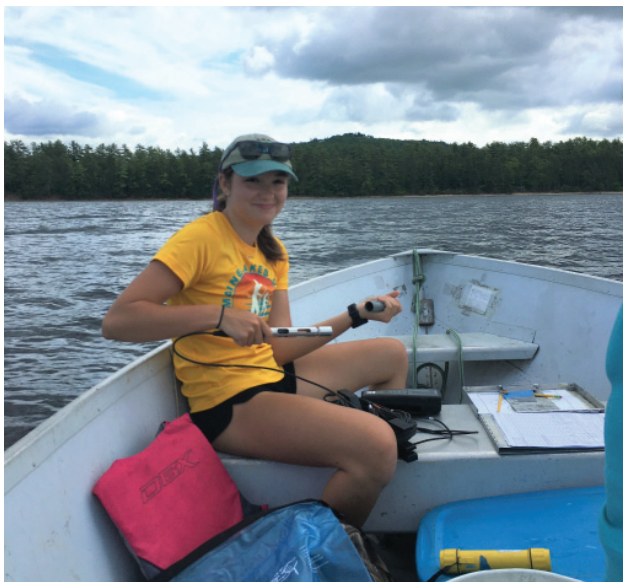


6: the number of freshwater jellyfish sightings

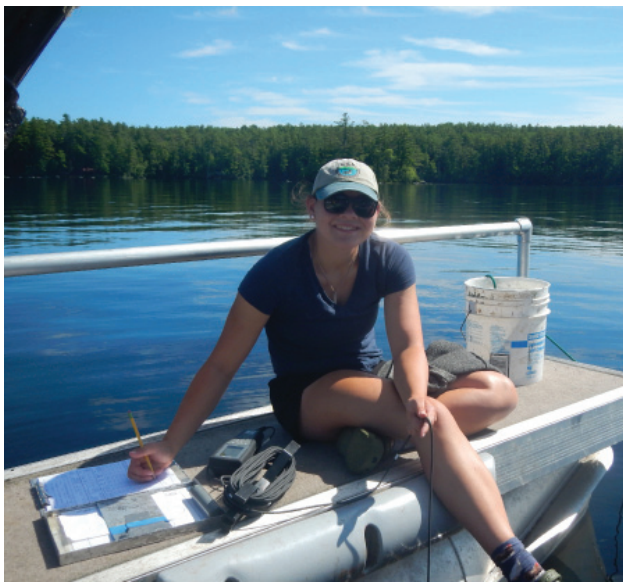
112: approximate miles paddled in a canoe



560: secchi readings taken



231: dissolved oxygen profiles obtained



62: fluorometer profiles

17: spiders "flipped" out of boats

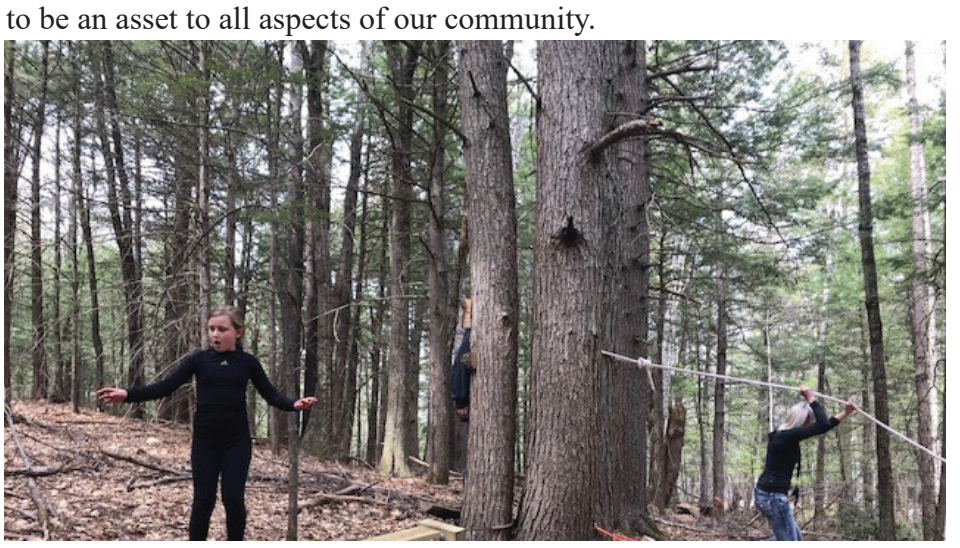
3: the number of interns it took to spell out LEA!

LEA's water monitoring program continues throughout the winter.

Record Setting Trail Use at Maine Lake Science Center

by Alyson Smith

The Pinehaven Trail at LEA's Maine Lake Science Center connects to Pondicherry Park and weaves through old pastureland and a lowland forested swamp along a boardwalk. There are seven low-elements challenge course stations along the trail that keep kids begging to return time and again. Anyone nearby can hear the happy squeals echoing through the woods. As a safe, fun way to spend time outdoors, the trails have proven to be an asset to all aspects of our community.



Outstandingly fun way to hike and work out. This place is a true gem!

We're from out of state and would like to thank you for one of the most well maintained trail systems we have hiked in our combined 158 years!

With comments like these and accolades from numerous trail users, it's easy to see why there was record-setting trail use at our Maine Lake Science Center this spring, summer, and early fall. Add that to COVID-19 hitting us in March and the trail and challenge course gave people of all ages a reason to get outside.

There were three times as many visitors this summer (about 4,000) as there were last summer, and half way through this fall we counted three times as many visitors (3000) as all of last fall. With this heavy usage comes the need for more maintenance to keep the trails and challenge course safe for

all to use. Despite high satisfaction reports, donations have been sparse (just over $300 for the entire year – which equals less than a nickel per person). If your family is enjoying this new trail and its amenities, please

visit the green "iron ranger" donation box to make a contribution or, better yet, become an LEA member!

The parking lot for the Pinehaven Trail is at the start of the MLSC driveway, off Willett Road. If the lot is full, please return later or consider another trail. Parking on the road is prohibited.

Please help to keep our trails special and safe by contributing to the donation post on the trail, becoming an LEA member, using the trails and elements responsibly, and picking up after yourselves. And, no smoking please. Thank you!

Share your experiences with us on Facebook & Instagram!

@lakesenvironmental

#MaineLakeScienceCenter

#HoltPondPreserve

#PinehavenTrail

#LakesEnvironmentalAssociation

All LEA trails and preserves are carry-in, carry-out.

More Aquatic Invaders Found in Maine

by Mary Jewett

We wish we didn't have new infestations to report, but it is important to know where they are so we can be cautious when traveling to unfamiliar places.

There were three new infestations discovered over the summer. The first wasn't a surprise at all -- the appearance of variable leaf milfoil (VLM) in Cobbossee Lake. This is the third invasive plant found in this lake, located just outside of Augusta. The other two invaders are European frog-bit and Eurasian water milfoil, both of which are being successfully managed by our partners at Friends of the Cobbossee Watershed. This new discovery is not unexpected, as Cobbossee Lake is connected to Anabessacook Lake, where groups have been managing variable leaf milfoil for several years. Cobbossee Lake is a popular boating spot, and we urge our members to be careful when visiting this region.

The second infestation was discovered in Pitcher Pond in Lincolnville. This 370-acre pond has very little motor boat traffic, with the only ramp gated, requiring a code to enter. Therefore, the discovery of European frog-bit, an invasive lily pad, caught everyone off guard. The Pitcher Pond Association hired Adrian Lefever, of the Friends of the Cobbossee Watershed, to survey the pond, which is when she discovered the offending plant. Fortunately, being a floating leaved plant, frog-bit is easy to locate and easy for volunteers to pull out. The small amount found was located near the boat launch and was easily removed, though more surveys will need to be conducted in the future.

The third infestation, and the most concerning to us at LEA, was European naiad (or brittle waternymph) found in Lake Arrowhead in Waterboro and Limerick. For years, this lake has had a severe variable milfoil infestation. This past summer, their courtesy boat inspectors pulled 76 fragments of VLM off boats at the launch (compared to the 15 fragments LEA inspectors found at Sebago Lake State Park). Lake Arrowhead is sprawling, often shallow, and very popular with recreational boaters. Naiad is a pervasive aquatic invasive, which reproduces via seeds and fragmentation, and spreads aggressively. That infestation was discovered by volunteer plant surveyor Debbie Broderick.

The Maine Department of Environmental Protection is aware of and managing these new infestations. Plans for how to proceed with control or eradication will be made over the winter, and work will begin in the spring. Manual harvesting and laying benthic barriers (underwater tarps) will probably continue to be the preferred method for dealing with variable leaf milfoil, but European naiad is a different story. The only other infestation of this aggressive plant in the state is in Northeast Pond in southern Maine. Both herbicides and physical control methods are being used to contain this outbreak.

All of these cases highlight the importance of early detection. Having volunteers or paid surveyors go out to methodically map the plants around the shoreline is the best way to catch an infestation early, making it much easier to manage. LEA member Mary Maxwell, with assistance from our staff, has put together a group of trained volunteers to conduct these surveys, and we plan to be out on the water in our area next summer. If you would like to become part of this effort, please contact Mary Jewett at mary@mainelakes.org.

European naiad - photo by Debbie Broderick

Andrew Legere with milfoil at Sebago Lake State Park

Classes to Help Keep our Lakes Clean

Despite an atmosphere not conducive to in-person learning, with a tent and new safety protocols in place, we were able to offer continued education and trainings for contractors and real estate agents this past year.

In courses taught by the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (MDEP), contractors learned the latest in erosion and sedimentation control practices. These courses cover the basics of water quality, the consequences of erosion, and how to select, install, and maintain erosion and sedimentation control that is best suited for the site. These classes are geared toward excavation and site work contractors but are also helpful to municipal code enforcement officers, consultants, engineers, public works employees, and those interested in water quality issues. The courses allow attendees to be certified or re-certified by MDEP.

For the third consecutive year, LEA offered "Maintaining the Market Value of Lakeshore Properties in Maine" to real estate professionals. The goal of this accredited course, which LEA co-taught with Portland Water District, is to develop a holistic view of Maine's lakes, ponds, rivers, and streams so agents can relay pertinent information to new lakefront landowners.

Dave Rocque, state soil scientist, and John Maclaine of DEP discussing conservation practices for gravel road construction and maintenance

Three new invasive plant infestations were found in Maine lakes in 2020. page 11

The Impermenance of Lakes

by Roy Lambert

So here we are, stuck in Oregon for all of 2020. By that, I mean we're not in Maine, with its beautiful lakes and ponds. But at least I was able to continue to swim at Clackamas Cove, a small lake connected by a channel to the river of the same name.

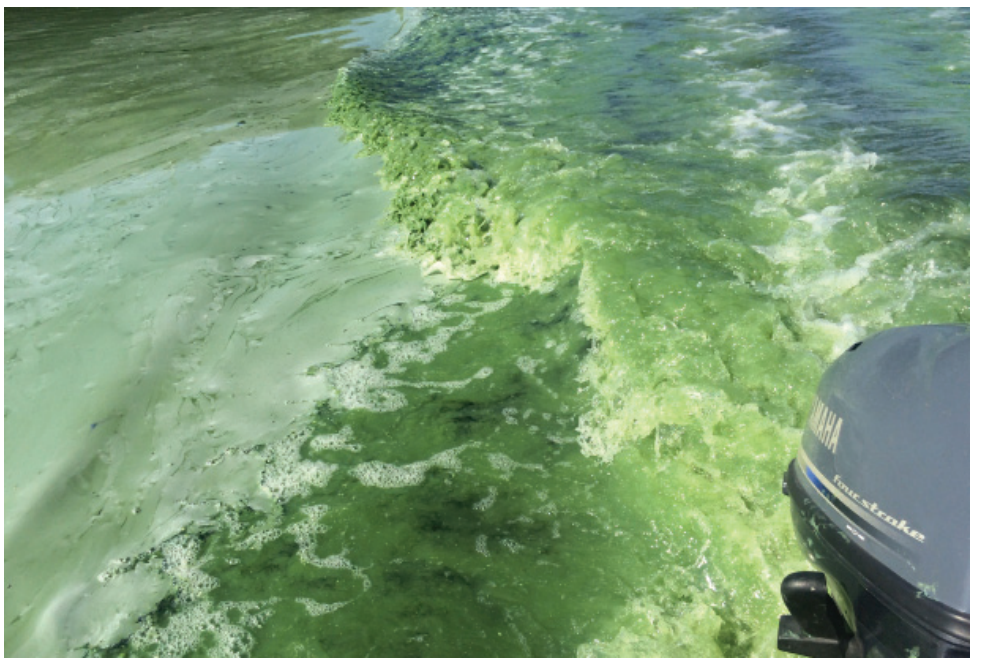
Or so I thought. Clackamas Cove is its own ecosystem. That's not surprising, as all lakes and ponds are their own ecosystems. Clackamas Cove's system gets inadequate water circulation. As the temperature climbs, water circulation doesn't offset the algae and bacteria growth in the lake. And the temperatures certainly climbed this past summer, with daily highs in the 80s and 90s. Because of this, I had to curtail my swimming in the "Cove" early.

The need to relocate my swimming is a vivid reminder of the principle that all lakes and ponds are impermanent. It may take hundreds of years or less than a decade, but the ecosystem which makes a lake swimmable and beautiful is also inherently unstable if prevailing conditions change. With Clackamas Cove, that change is the annual summer temperatures.

Dorena Lake south of us was the site of my first lockdown swim this year. The water was beautiful, a blue-green shining experience during the swim. But that wonderful color was an indicator of the algae growth that occurs annually due to excessive timber harvesting without proper best management practices within the watershed. Dorena Lake has county park signs warning of summer blue-green blooms.

Maine's lakes are generally more stable, but increased development in their watersheds threatens to upset that stability. Less than two dozen Maine lakes to date have experienced explosive algae blooms. But all lakes will succumb if their phosphorous levels increase with unrestrained stormwater runoff into them. The runoff carries phosphorus and the phosphorous feeds the algae. Bad stuff follows.

Keeping runoff out of any lake isn't rocket science: Natural and thick vegetation surrounding a lake infiltrates water into the ground, extracts the nutrients in the water, and stabilizes the soil against erosion. That's why lakes surrounded by forest rarely have algae blooms. Their ecosystems are inherently stable.



A photo from Maine Department of Environmental Protection field staff of an algal bloom on Lovejoy Pond

Owners of lakeside property often don't appreciate the impermanence of the beauty that attracted them in the first place. They can't imagine their lake following an algae bloom or how their summer experiences would be destroyed. This failure of imagination is the real threat to Maine's lakes. I say this because the most active LakeSmart programs (a lake protection program which educates property owners about how to minimize runoff) are those on lakes which have experienced algae blooms. That's very much closing the barn door after the horse is gone.

So when you next see a lake, see it for what it is: A moment (hopefully a long moment) of magic with no permanence.

Analyze This!

by Ben Peierls

The Maine Lake Science Center made a giant technological leap forward in spring 2020 when we took delivery of a SEAL Analytical AA500 automated analyzer, funded by a generous donation from an anonymous family foundation. Our unit was custom configured to measure nutrients like phosphorus and nitrogen, so we often call it a nutrient analyzer or autoanalyzer for short. Phosphorus is one of the key measures of lake water quality and a critical part of the LEA monitoring program. Our plan is to do all of our phosphorus measurements in-house and eventually eliminate external laboratory fees.

Since travel was restricted early in the pandemic, SEAL staff were not able to visit the science center for installation and training. Instead, we connected by Skype to the SEAL lab for their first–ever remote field installation. Support staff also remotely installed, configured, and ran the software. The process was surprisingly straightforward, and after two days, we were running calibrations and test samples.

The autoanalzyer works as a continuous flow analyzer, which means chemicals and samples are constantly pumped through a network of tubing where the fluid stream is mixed, heated, and measured for light absorbance. Those chemicals (or reagents) react with phosphorus in the samples to produce a color, the intensity of which is proportional to the amount of phosphorus present. To turn that color reading into a phosphorus concentration, we calibrate the analyzer and check its performance with known standards.

Even though, as the name suggests, much of the process is automated, getting that to happen does require many manual steps, like weighing chemicals, diluting solutions, adding reagents, and digesting samples in our steam sterilizer. Fortunately, we had a very capable and hard-working summer intern to help in the lab. Garrett Higgins (from Gorham, ME and attending the University of Vermont) joined us and put his recent chemistry class experience to good use; by summer's end, he was running the instrument like a pro. To date, we have processed over 450 lake and test samples, with many more to come as we work towards analytical independence.

Ben Peierls getting the auto-analyzer set up at the Maine Lake Science Center

We are getting some cool new instruments at the Science Center...stay tuned!

What Beats in-person Learning? Nothing!

by Mary Jewett

When it became clear that school was not going to be "business as usual" this year, Alanna and I started working on remote lessons and modifying the lessons we already had to fit new restrictions. We pulled together our resources and knowledge to quickly adjust to the changing school protocols.

With the help of a Casco Bay Estuary Partnership grant, we were able to crank out two online lessons, which will be shared with educators around the state. The lessons we chose to create for the grant, Benthic Macroinvertebrates (BMIs) and Water Properties, are based on two lessons that we have historically done in-person at our local schools.

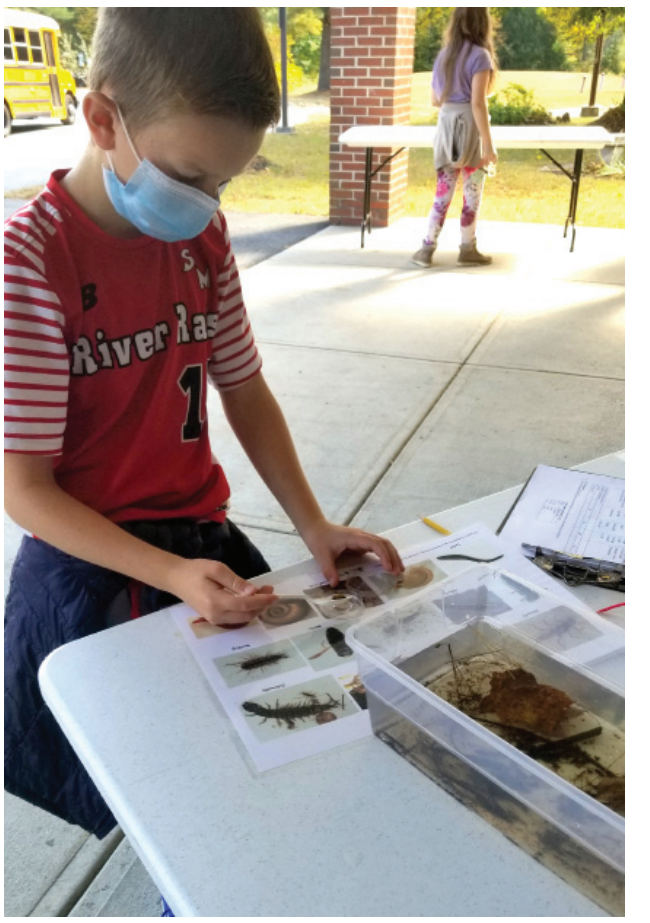
In my opinion, the best and most memorable lesson in our arsenal is on Benthic Macroinvertebrates. This exercise involves aquatic insects and other invertebrates that live on the bottom of our lakes, ponds, rivers, and streams. These bugs have varying levels of tolerance for pollution and changes in water quality. For example, mayflies are sensitive to changes, while leeches are tolerant to them. The students' challenge is to determine whether a waterbody is healthy or not by studying what lives within it.

The remote lesson that Alanna and I created includes photos of different bugs. The students use the photos to complete a worksheet, which then calculates the "stream score" based on what animals are in the photos. The exercise also includes introduction and wrap up videos that push the students to ask questions: What are BMIs? How do bioassessments work? What affects the water quality in this system? These questions, and more, are answered during the course of this online lesson. While it is different from how we did it before, the students have been engaged and we are happy with the results.

That said, nothing beats looking at live bugs! So, when it came time to do this lesson with our local students, I wanted them to experience the real thing. I usually conduct this lesson for 6th grade students at Lake Region Middle School and Harrison Elementary School. Given that most of our students are doing the hybrid model, meaning they are only physically at school two days a week, it was a challenge to reach every 6th grader in our service area. The schools worked with us to create an appropriate outdoor space, and I made sure that each student had their own set of materials (per COVID restrictions). The biggest challenge this fall was actually an issue I regularly face, only magnified. I always need to find enough bugs to create a nice little ecosystem in each container. This year, however, I had twice as many containers to fill. In the past, students have worked in groups to locate, identify, and record what bugs they have. In 2020, they each had to do their own investigation, with some help from me and the teachers. I am happy to report that, based on our findings, all the bugs came from healthy waters, with plenty of mayflies, dragonflies, and a few content leeches.

The lesson wasn't exactly the same, with everyone wearing masks and sometimes contending with inclement weather, but it was still the best thing they have done in school this year (their words, not mine). Being able to share this experience with them, to inspire that sense of wonder and curiosity, is the best thing I have done this year.

If you would like to watch any of the LEA education videos, please visit our website: mainelakes.org and click on the education dropdown menu.



Identifying BMIs at Lake Region Middle School

Bequests: What does it take? by Charlie Tarbell, LEA Treasurer

The following is the second in a series of articles about the newly-established LEA Lakes Legacy League. The first article, in the spring 2020 newsletter, introduced the idea of The League and discussed my own personal motivation for participating. Today I will speak to the execution (the "how").

This story starts with the fact that LEA is very proud that our total fundraising and administration costs are less than 10% of our overall expenses (source: 2018 IRS Form 990 submission). The non-profit benchmark is 20%. Clearly then, we have no full-time "development" staff. So, while researching bequests, LEA's Executive Director, Colin Holme, and I paid a visit to a local man at his lakeside home. This fellow, whom I will call Bob, is an octogenarian with over 40 years of membership in LEA. He was also, once-upon-a-time, a member of the LEA Board of Directors. When asked about his own bequest motivation, Bob just pointed to the lake and smiled, "Need I say more?" He went on to say that his motivation was more than purely emotional. "The lakes are the economic lifeblood of this region. Protection of the lakes is protection of that economic 'crown jewel'."

Bob spent his career managing money and thinking through "worst case scenarios" for his clients' enterprises (how to sustain an organization in case of the owner's death, disability, etc.). It was a natural extension of his career work to consider estate planning for himself and his wife, although Bob acknowledged that many folks would rather not think about "popping off". In Bob's case, during a regular estate planning review, he instructed his lawyer to designate 10% of his estate to certain non-profit organizations. Bob has indicated that LEA is one of those non-profits.

If you are revising your will or if you are creating a will, adding such a provision is fairly simple, perhaps even as simple as adding a self-executed and legally-notarized codicil to your existing will. In either case, it is always a good idea to involve your attorney in executing your plans, and you also might want to talk with your financial advisor about the various means available to carry out your plans.

As for me, while I spoke of my motivation in the last article, my means of designating a bequest to LEA was also quite simple. I have a separate and distinct SEP IRA account which is left over from my time as a consultant, and I have designated LEA as a beneficiary on that account. LEA gets the appreciated value, and my kids do not have to pay the income taxes. Beneficiary designation is accomplished via a simple entry through my online brokerage account.

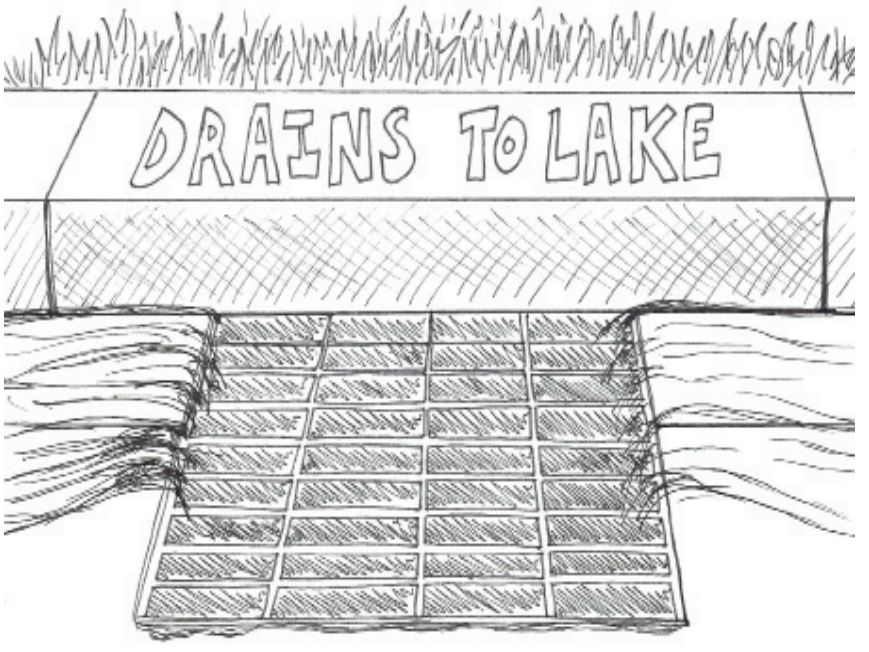
Bob and I are among the first members of the new LEA Lakes Legacy League. Since publication of the first article in this series, several other individuals have contacted LEA to make Colin aware of their bequest designation. If you, too, would like to join The League, please feel free to contact Colin. You can choose to receive acknowledgement of your "League" status at LEA's annual meetings, or you may choose to remain anonymous.

Either way, you can take pride in and rest assured of your support for LEA into the future.

Board member Henry Hudson III delivering a load of rebar to construct benthic barriers to control milfoil

An LEA gift membership fits nicely in a stocking.

Rain Drain Word Jumble



Rain Drain

A O S T B

W L A S E

E L I N T

M P W S A

A P P R I R

Now, rearrange the circled letters to find to the answer to the puzzle.

"Some drains are just for rain!"

Keeping Sediment out of Otter Pond

This fall, LEA planned and oversaw the reconstruction of a badly eroding camp road that drains to Otter Pond in Bridgton. Prior to construction, approximately 1000 feet of steep, gravel road perennially washed away into this small, pristine pond. The project involved installing several wide speed-bump like waterbars in the road that peel runoff from the travel way and allow it to return to groundwater and the surrounding woods through sediment basins. Funding for this project came from the Stormwater Compensation Fund for Otter Pond, which LEA manages. Plans were designed by HEB Engineers and the construction was done by Warren Excavation. Thank you to the Reinhard and Haneberg families for allowing this important work to be done!

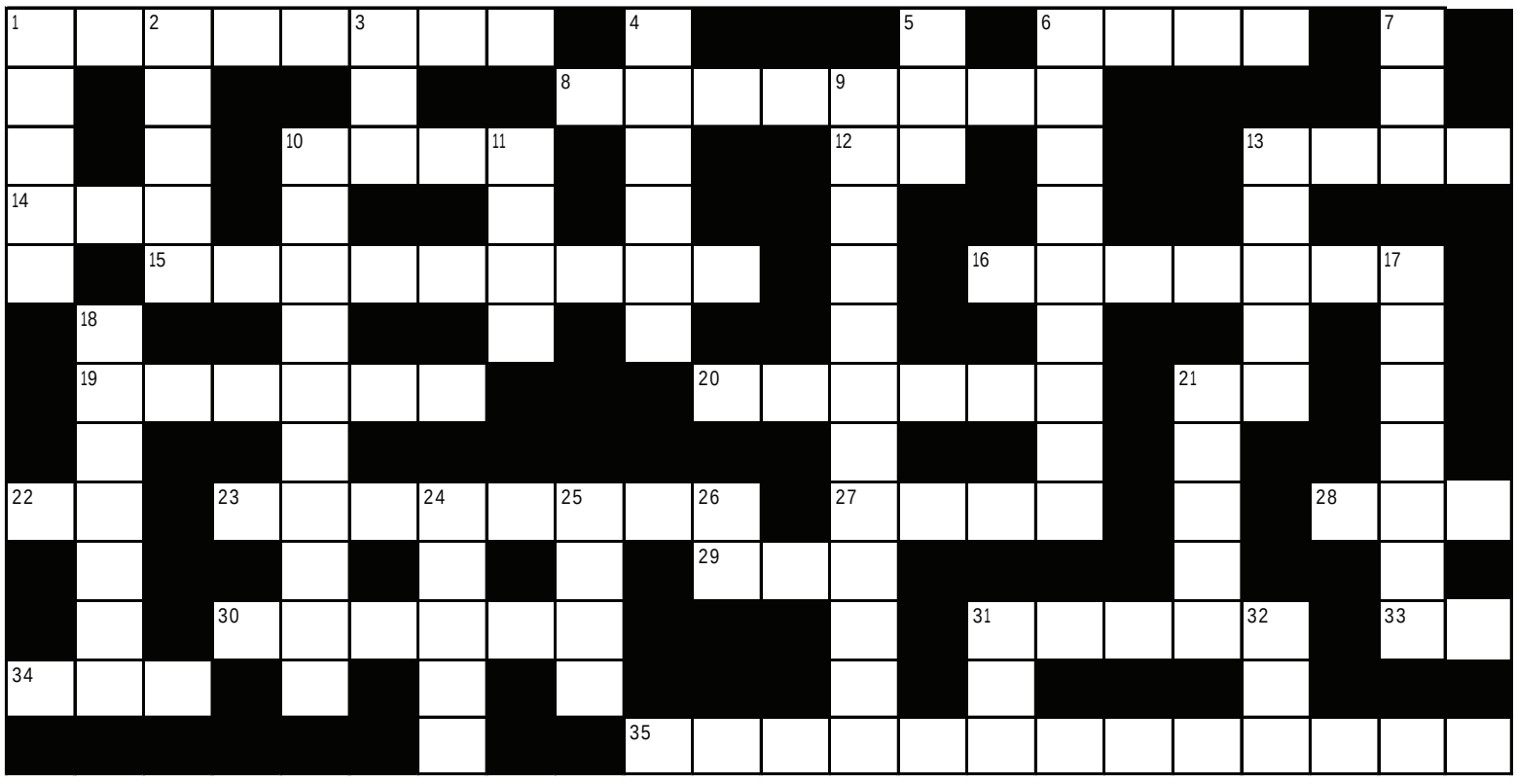
Several new turnouts were added to the road to reduce the amount of stormwater runoff reaching the pond

BEFORE: The badly eroding Otter Pond boat launch before the project

AFTER: Three new waterbars were added to the boat launch as well as additional erosion control methods to the road above the launch

Leaving vegetation along the water will help keep the lake clean.

Lake Crossword: Forest for the Trees



Across

1. Bird called timberdoodle or bogsucker, also Maine politician
6. Woodland Owner Appreciation Day abbr.
8. This year's LEA anniversary
10. Invertebrate that builds soil
12. Not Applicable
13. Spruce bits used in brewing, or helpful hints
14. Number of LEA educators
15. The land that drains to a lake
16. Stem of a leaf
19. Northern-most town in Sebago Lake watershed
20. This disc is used to test water clarity
21. Mountain abbr.
22. Source ____ sea
23. Water from Sebago Lake flows into
27. Red ____ , cousin to 6 down
28. Invasive European Frog _____
29. Happens to wooden docks
30. A tree's sugar factory
31. We ALL need to protect them
33. State that is home to the most infested lake in the northeast
34. Water in its solid form
35. Evaporation of water from leaves

Down

1. ____caps
2. U-shaped curve in a river
3. Optical Dissolved Oxygen
4. Forests act naturally as this for water
5. Awesome & local non-profit
6. Maine State tree
7. Invasive Aquatic Plant abbr.
9. Word referring to raindrops hitting the tree canopy or opposite team catches ball
10. Late-flowering tree-shrub
11. A nice substitute for grass on your lake lot
13. Local fish that likes cold oxygen-rich waters
17. Process of water carrying material downhill
18. Non-living components in an ecosystem
21. Maine tree species with a 3-5 lobed leaf
24. Lake bays
25. Tournament warm-water fish
26. 365 days
31. Unit of measure at a swim meet
32. Test that most LEA interns recently took

Answers online @ mainelakes.org/answers

LEA's Colin Holme presenting at the real estate workshop at MLSC

A hike with some of the crew from Sebago Clean Waters!

A zoomed in shot of a mayfly

Check out LEA's YouTube channel for cool local videos and activities.

DEP's John Maclaine talking about erosion control at a course at MLSC this fall

MLSC lab intern, Garrett Higgins, prepping water samples for nutrient analysis

Phosphorus being measured on the new nutrient analyzer at the Science Center

Do you have gently used winter gear sitting in your closet or garage?

Or rather, we want your stuff!

Alanna and Mary are aiming to take students outside A LOT this winter, and to be safe they need proper gear. *And they need it for keeps!*

We are looking for *clean* **and** *gently loved*: **HATS, gloves, BOOTS, Jackets,** *Snowpants* **and snowshoes.**

Questions/ comments: alanna@mainelakes.org

THANK YOU!!

Connect with Us!

There are many ways for you to interact with LEA and keep up on what we are doing as an organization year-round. Watch our summer water testing interns as they work or our educators as they teach the wonders of our watershed by liking us on Facebook and following us on Instagram (@lakesenvironmental). Don't forget to check our website, mainelakes.org, for the latest water testing results on your favorite lake. You will also find our current events calendar, information on invasive plants, news of the Maine Lake Science Center and more! Please don't hesitate to call us at our Main Street office if you have any questions at 207-647-8580.

@lakesenvironmental

Make renewing easy! LEA accepts recurring donations on our website:

mainelakes.org

Looking for a unique way to give to LEA? Stop into your local TD Bank and ask about the Infinity Program. Here's how it works: If you have an existing checking account TD Bank will donate $10 to LEA. For opening a new checking account TD Bank will donate $50 to LEA. For a new or existing savings account TD Bank will donate a percentage of the average balance to LEA. This all happens at no cost to you! Simply give them the LEA code: AF307.

TD Bank

Are you an LEA member? Please help us protect our lakes!

You can join LEA with a contribution of any amount. Just mail this form and a donation to LEA, 230 Main Street, Bridgton, ME 04009.
You can also join or renew at www.mainelakes.org or in person at our Main Street office.

Name_____

Winter Address_____

Summer MAILING Address _____

Favorite Lake_____

Year-round Phone_____

Email_____

I am interested in information on estate planning and planned giving: ☐

Donation Information

☐ $1000 Benefactor
☐ $500 Patron
☐ $250 Sponsor
☐ $150 Lake Sponsor
☐ $100 Family
☐ $50 Individual
☐ $____ Other Amount

I would like to make an additional donation to the:
☐ Maine Lake Science Center $____
☐ Mifoil Fund $____
☐ Environmental Education Fund $____

☐ Anonymous Gift (We occasionally acknowledge our donors publicly. Check this box if you would like your donation to remain anonymous.)

☐ Check enclosed ☐ Charge my credit card $_____

Credit Card # _____ Expiration Date ___ /___

CVC _____ Signature _____