



Lakes Environmental Association

Protecting and preserving the lakes of Maine

50th Anniversary Campaign Case for Support



A Letter from the Executive Director



There is something ingrained in my being that draws me to water. The clean, clear waters that fill the valleys in our landscape provide me with a sense of place, recreation and contentment. While few put this feeling into words, I suspect I share this sentiment with residents of and visitors to our area.

But I worry about the future of our lakes. And this worry is not baseless. All we need to do is look around to see why. Lakes in New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Maine have been infused with noxious algae blooms and invaded by exotic plants. It is not just aesthetics and recreation that are impacted. There are real and very serious health threats that come with algae blooms, and invasive aquatic plants and fauna can forever change our beautiful lakes.

The good news is that we can prevent the bulk of these problems, but only if we invest in the solutions. LEA has a history of innovation and collaboration within the community and we are going to need both to protect our waters.

LEA has been a tireless advocate for our lakes: asking for and implementing better water quality protections; monitoring our lakes; clearing out milfoil; and providing our children and community members with a hands-on understanding of lakes. With improved access, warmer temperatures, bigger storms, and more development, the threats to our lakes continue to grow.

I truly believe that LEA has the right tools, but we need your help to get out in front of these challenges. Prevention is always better and cheaper than remediation.

A strong endowment will give us the opportunity to keep our lakes clean and clear for the next 50 years. I hope we can count on your support.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Colin Holme".

Colin Holme
Executive Director

The Need for Lake Protection

Imagine your favorite lake or pond saturated with foul smelling, blue-green algae. As you wade in, your feet quickly disappear into the murk. This appalling picture is not just a possible scenario for the future, it is a reality that more and more landowners are facing on lakes in and around Maine.

Would you and your kids be eager to spend time at the lake if your shoreline was clogged with invasive milfoil? What if every August fish went belly up and washed up on the shore, as they did in Lake Auburn in 2012? What if there was a toxic algae bloom in Sebago Lake that closed the water supply for the city of Portland? What would happen to property values and our local economy if our lakes succumb to any of these very real threats?

In Maine right now, some lakefront property owners are facing seven-figure costs for chemical treatments to reduce algae growth. If these treatments work, they are expected to last only 10-15 years, and then they need to be repeated.

LEA's work over the past 50 years has been dedicated to preserving the high water quality of our lakes and waters for both our year-around residents and the millions of visitors and tourists who visit Maine annually. In very real and concrete ways, LEA helps the community by monitoring lake health and providing planning and mitigation services that prevent the need for expensive and short-term lake treatments. We work to monitor and protect lakes so costly remediation is not necessary to restore water quality. LEA's staff, board, members and volunteers all play an important role.

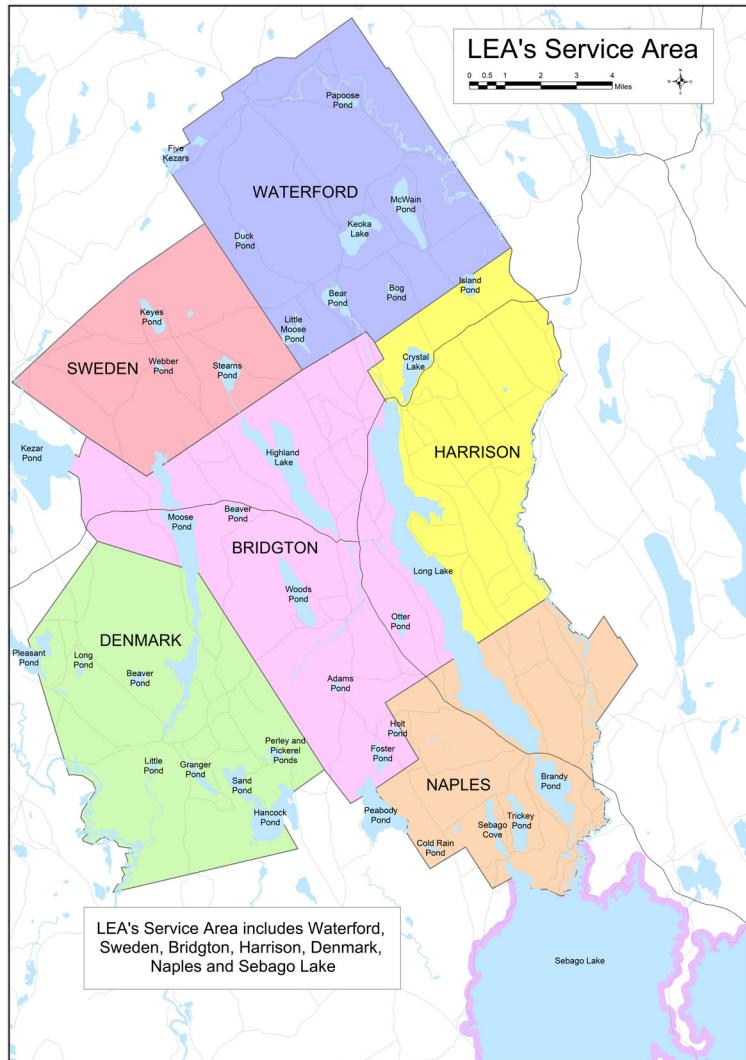


Our Mission

The Lakes Environmental Association is a regional non-profit organization, funded by members, focused on protecting lakes and water quality in western Maine. LEA's mission is to preserve and restore the high water quality and the traditional character of Maine's lakes, watersheds and related natural resources. The long-term survival of Maine's lakes is critical to present and future generations.

Who Does LEA Help?

LEA's immediate service area includes 41 lakes and the towns that make up the upper Sebago Lake/Saco River Watersheds. We help lake residents learn best practices for property management to protect water quality. We help the surrounding towns by reviewing how development projects, large and small, manage their stormwater. We provide shoreland zoning and natural resource based mapping and model language for ordinances and planning initiatives to municipalities within our service area. We help local lake associations by providing routine and advanced water quality monitoring, analysis guidance on lake issues, and aquatic invasives prevention and control services. Our educational programming, which focuses on hands-on immersion learning, reaches over 1,000 students and hundreds of adults annually. Our milfoil control team removes tons of this invasive plant every year in five separate waterbodies and is the largest not-for-profit control team in the state. In addition to training all Courtesy Boat Inspectors for the entire state and running the annual Milfoil Summit, we hire, schedule and oversee 30-40 boat inspectors to cover the launches within our area.





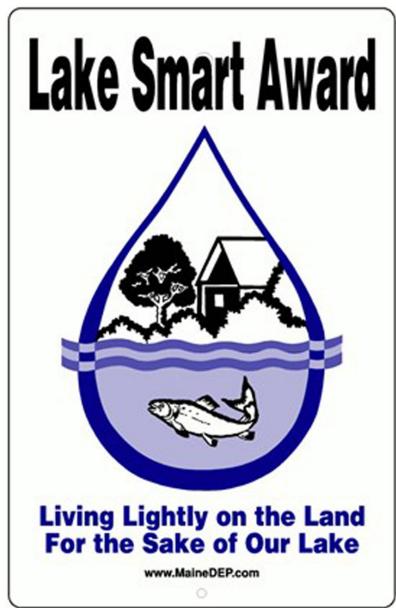
At the state level, we monitor legislation and strategically advocate for or against bills that affect lakes. LEA staff regularly serve on statewide planning groups and we work closely with state agencies and organizations involved in lake protection. LEA is the largest and most developed lake association in the state and we regularly work with all the major regional lake associations to share ideas, programs and initiatives. Because LEA's service area includes a huge portion of the Sebago Lake Watershed, our work directly benefits water consumers, including several hundred thousand people living in the greater Portland metropolitan area.

Our most recent initiative, the Maine Lake Science Center, is helping to focus and prioritize our work to ensure that we continue to stay ahead of the most pressing lake issues. The Science Center is serving as a testing ground for some of the most innovative and cutting-edge lake research in the state, a training and outreach center for everyone working on lake and watershed issues, and a community resource that helps people connect with our surrounding environment.



What are LEA's core services?

The Lakes Environmental Association is dedicated to protecting the waters and watersheds of Maine. Accomplishing this task requires working on many different fronts. Our major programs include: comprehensive water quality monitoring, aquatic invasives control, technical assistance for landowners, businesses, and municipalities, adult and school based education, advanced research, and lake advocacy.



Clean Lake Check-Up

Clean Lake Check-Up and LakeSmart – How individual owners steward their property is ultimately going to control how our lakes fare over time. We need to reach out to and work with everyone in the watershed to make sure landowners have a clear understanding of what will harm or benefit water quality. These programs offer different approaches that work with different people, without the fear of regulation.



Municipal services – To ensure new development doesn't end up putting dirty or excessive amounts of stormwater into our lakes, projects need to be carefully reviewed. LEA has a long history of helping volunteer planners evaluate erosion and phosphorus control plans that accompany new building projects and advocating for appropriate protections. In addition to development review, LEA provides environmental mapping, ordinance development, and review services and training for planning board members and code officers.

Invasive aquatic species program – When it comes to invasive aquatic plants, LEA is a statewide leader. In 2001, we pushed for the original milfoil sticker bill, which created a funding mechanism for control and prevention of these invasive plants. Today, we train, hire and oversee dozens of Courtesy Boat Inspectors who guard our lakes from new invasions. Our milfoil control crew is the largest non-profit crew in the state and does removal work on five waterbodies including Sebago Lake, Long Lake and Brandy Pond. We run the annual Milfoil Summit where hundreds of lake advocates share ideas and receive training, and we work with local legislators on both sides of the aisle to push for fair and adequate funding for control of aquatic invaders.



Water testing and monitoring – Fifty years ago, LEA was formed on the shores of Long Lake by a small group of citizens who were concerned that no one was looking out for the lake. One of their tasks was to begin a water monitoring program. Over the years, that original initiative has grown to be one of the most advanced testing programs in the state. Routine, long-term monitoring combined with high-tech buoys and experienced staff have allowed us to better understand our lakes and engage with the community.



Education – LEA brings hands-on and outdoor based lessons to over 1,000 students in the surrounding schools every year. Our educators work with the teachers and school systems to ensure our curriculum aligns with state standards and local goals. Our year-round education series offers workshops, walks, classes and adventures for all interest levels, ages, and abilities, with topics ranging from loons to forest management.

Land conservation and recreation – LEA owns and manages the 700-acre Holt Pond Preserve and the 400-acre Highland Research Forest. LEA also maintains the Stevens Brook Trail in Bridgton and partnered with Loon Echo Land Trust to establish Pondicherry Park in downtown Bridgton. Preservation of large tracts of upper watershed land is essential to clean lakes. We use these precious, preserved outdoor spaces as an opportunity to teach about the connectivity of different ecological systems. These preserves and their trail systems are open to the general public and are incorporated into our walks, workshops, trainings and camp programs.



Environmental policy and affiliations – Much of LEA's effectiveness is attributable to state and regional affiliations and its leadership in developing statewide lake policy. LEA was a key player in the original "Milfoil Bill", holds the annual Maine Milfoil Summit, convenes bi-annual meetings of large, regional lake associations, and LEA staff members have served on numerous state task forces.

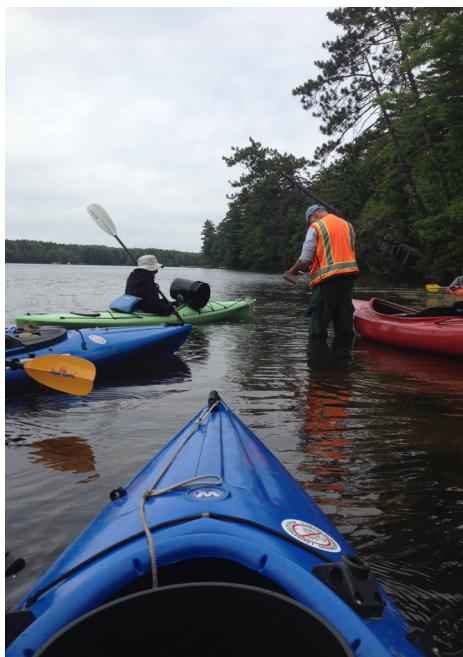
Membership services, funding and administration – LEA's life blood is membership support. Currently, we have approximately 1,300 members who provide 60-70% of our operating budget. Maintaining this support and fulfilling administrative duties are constants.

Special projects – Over the years, LEA has become involved in a wide range of special projects aimed at protecting our lakes. These projects have ranged from preventing a nuclear repository in the area to the current Maine Lakes Collaborative which aims to increase the level of understanding and commitment to lakes across the state. Involvement in these projects has helped raise LEA's standing in the region and state as a lake leader. **7**

What is LEA's Track Record?

Some of LEA's major accomplishments:

- One of the strongest water quality monitoring programs in the state
- Pushing for and helping to pass the original milfoil bill and turning that legislation into an efficient action plan to prevent and control invasive aquatics
- Stopping raw sewage from flowing into Long Lake by helping to get Bridgton's original sewer system installed
- Preventing this area from becoming a high level nuclear waste repository



- Helping to establish Salmon Point Park on Long Lake, the Holt Pond Preserve, the Highland Research Forest, and Pondicherry Park in Bridgton
- Offering technical assistance to lakefront landowners, municipalities and businesses
- Participating in over a dozen watershed projects aimed at improving water quality
- Offering experiential based environmental education programs to the community and in the surrounding schools
- Clearing out milfoil from the state's busiest inland waterway, the Songo River

- Hiring and training Courtesy Boat Inspectors in the region
- Managing and implementing large stormwater control projects for all the lakes in our service area
- Building, funding and operating the Maine Lake Science Center
- Developing and implementing model ordinance language to protect our lakes



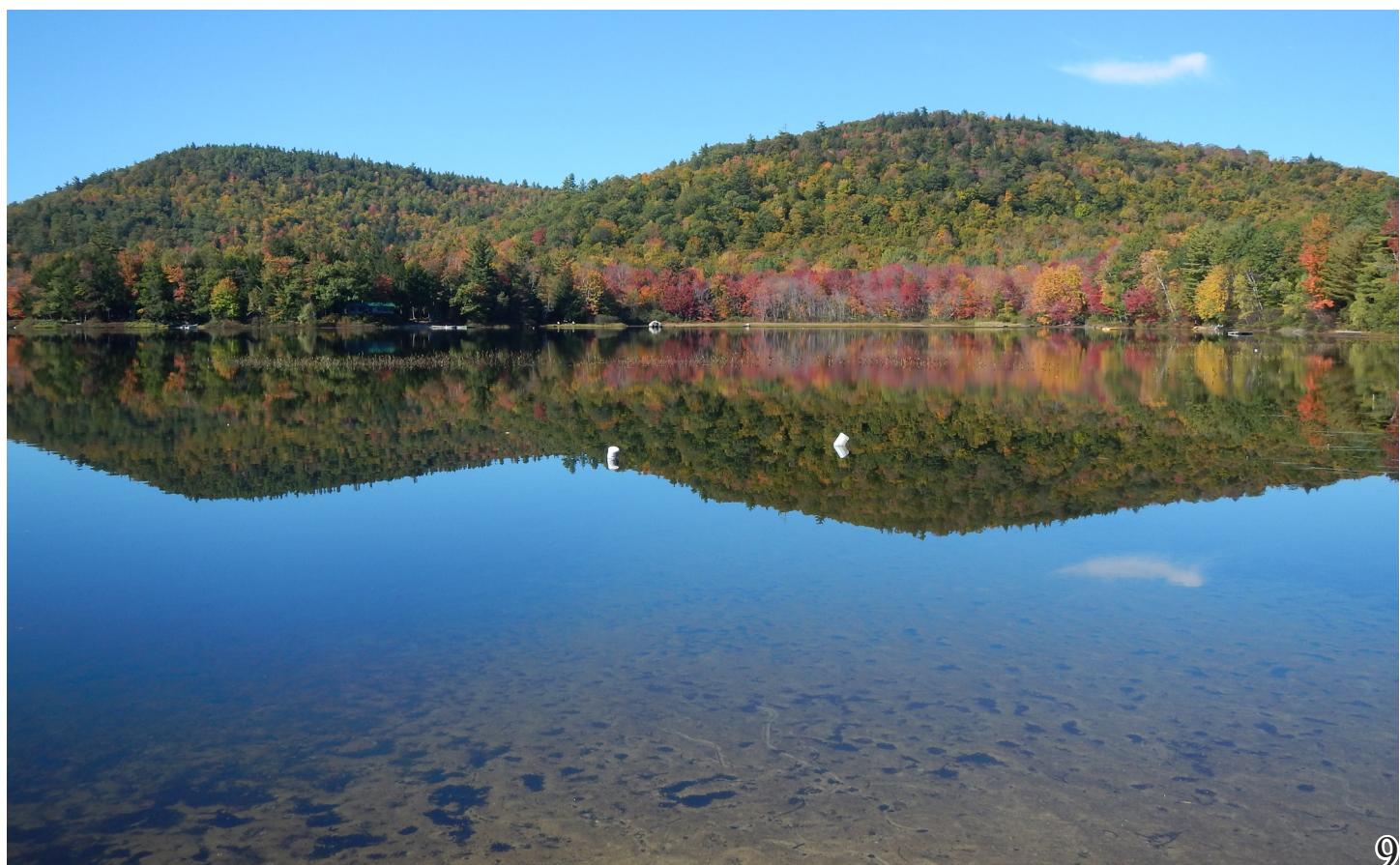
LEA and the Future

As population grows, tourism increases, and our area grows warmer and wetter, threats to water quality will only grow. If we fail to invest in our lakes, we will see the same problems already facing our southern neighbors, including regular algae blooms and more waters infested with invasive plants.

We need to act now and think proactively if we want to protect our lakes for future generations. This has been LEA's strategy all along but today the pressures and stakes are higher. In the last ten years, LEA's reputation as a local and regional leader has grown immensely. With funding and adequate support, we can keep this momentum growing, and aggressively take on some of the largest issues facing our lakes.

Take a minute and imagine a future where all boats are inspected for invasives before they launch. Imagine new development projects treating 100 percent of their stormwater before it builds up and causes erosion that reaches our freshwaters. Imagine capacity and resources to adequately treat stormwater from existing sources, like town roads. Imagine a clear, beautiful lake free of invasive plants and toxic algae blooms.

LEA can help make this future a reality. But we need your help. We have already seen that other states have implemented mandatory boat inspections. There are regions in the country where every drop of stormwater must be accounted for within a development project. LEA is working now with other organizations, towns and businesses to increase funding to fix historical sources of lake pollution, and LEA is working with partners to protect upper watershed tributaries so our lakes can be clean and clear well into the future. You can help us continue and enhance this work by ensuring the Lakes Environmental Association is around for another 50 years.



50th Anniversary Campaign Goals

Total capital campaign goal: \$750,000. LEA has been around for a half century but if we want to make it another 50 years, we are going to need strong support from the lakes community. Help us make sure LEA is around in 2070!

\$500,000 to Enhance LEA's General Operations

To meet a pressing need, LEA has grown tremendously in the past decade. We have added new staff, acquired 400 acres of pristine woods for watershed research and sustainable forestry, and built a state-of-the-art Science Center. Thanks to the generosity of numerous individuals and foundations, we have no debt on any of LEA's assets. This allows us to spend 92% of our operating budget on direct services.

Landowner technical assistance, educational programming, courtesy boat inspections, trainings, milfoil control and water testing – this is where LEA funding is spent. Our staff are skilled, efficient and involved in all major issues facing our lakes, but we struggle to offer competitive compensation. We need committed, engaged employees and modern programs and technology. Increasing funding for General Operations will help us do that.

The need and the plan for the \$500,000:

\$150,000 for Advanced Monitoring Equipment and MLSC Lab

This will allow us to undertake nutrient analysis in-house, monitor pathogens like E-coli, assess toxic algae, and invest in laboratory staff.

\$100,000 for Stormwater Mitigation and Planning

This funding will help build stormwater assessment capability, increase the amount of land uses which have stormwater treatment, hire seasonal interns to document problem sites, and build capacity to obtain federal, state, and private grants. It will also allow us to expand our involvement in the planning and review process and offer more compliance-related services.

\$250,00 for Invasives and Upper Watershed Work

This funding will be used to research new eradication technologies, make improvements to invasive control laws and ordinances and upgrade our control equipment. For long-term lake protection, we need to refocus on the upper watershed. With additional funding we can assess the most vulnerable and sensitive properties in the watershed, develop legal and monetary incentives to protect land and build relationships with the largest landowners.



Endowment Categories:

Restricted Funds:

- The Restricted Legacy Fund
- The Lowell Education Fund

Unrestricted Funds:

- The Unrestricted Legacy Fund
- The Lubrano Family Fund

\$250,000 for the LEA Endowment - Make your gift a Legacy

Giving toward the LEA endowment is a gift that will last beyond your lifetime. A gift that will keep LEA programs and initiatives running well into the future. A solid endowment will keep our organization strong and financially stable even when the economy isn't. The principal investment on LEA's restricted endowments must remain intact but up to four percent of the interest can be used every year for specific purposes. The principal of LEA's unrestricted endowment can only be accessed with a full vote of the board of directors. Although this option is available to the board, it has never been used. LEA's endowment funds have been carefully stewarded over the years and the value has grown steadily. It is now a key part of LEA's financial stability.

If you would like to know more about our existing endowments or how you can contribute to the long-term stability of LEA by making a gift to our endowment, please contact LEA's Executive Director, Colin Holme or Treasurer, Charlie Tarbell.



Why Does LEA Deserve Support?

Our lakes are under pressure and they are not going to protect themselves. Southern Maine is a prime area for growth and we can expect more development and more use of our lakes in the future. With this growth comes more need for education, oversight and understanding of lake issues. LEA has been a leader not only in western Maine, but across the state, and has the infrastructure, capability and capacity to grow to take on these issues.

With your help we could have staff fully immersed in town planning decisions that affect lakes. Today, we have limited hours we can devote to reviewing large projects and working with developers to make sure new building projects do not impact water quality.

With funding, we could invest more in education. If we truly want to change how people view, understand and interact with lakes, we need to offer innovative programs that are geared to all demographics of the community. These programs take staff time and resources, which are already thin.

We will only see the warning signs of water quality deterioration if we are looking at the right indicators. Lake systems are complicated and variable. We need to invest in our water monitoring and research to make sure we understand these systems and can prevent or reduce the impact of problems before they occur by providing an early warning system.

Invasive aquatic plants aren't going away. In fact, the issue is only likely to grow in the future. We need more funding to properly protect our uninfested waters. We need to increase the amount and hours at launches that are covered by Courtesy Boat Inspectors and look at innovative ways to prevent plants from moving around when inspectors are not there. Although LEA's milfoil control team is the largest in the state and extremely efficient, we simply don't have the funding to manage all the infestations in our service area.

If these are things that you care about, then we share the same goals. Please help us protect the lakes we love by contributing to LEA's 50th Anniversary Campaign.



"Thanks to the education, advocacy, and abiding commitment of the LEA to Maine's waterways, both visitors and residents of the Lakes Region enjoy a quality of life unknown in many parts of the world. LEA is a treasure with a legacy that affects generations. The staff is simply extraordinary - knowledgeable, dedicated, kind, and enthusiastic. As year-round residents on Highland Lake, we have front-row seats on some of LEA's remarkable results: a clean, spring-fed lake and bustling streams that define the town of Bridgton. Thank you, LEA, for your vision and leadership."

-Jack and Deborah Daw Heffernan, long-time members

"LEA uses a holistic approach to protecting lakes and water quality. We work with the community to make sure our projects and proposals adequately address pressing issues and are practical enough to be implemented. If we stop looking out for our lakes, it is only a matter of time before they succumb to algae and invasive plants."

-Colin Holme, LEA Executive Director

"The "LEA magic" has been the ability to innovate programs, challenge the status quo, and create partnerships on local, regional and state levels to implement meaningful lake protection. Loyal and generous member support has allowed LEA to do what is best for Maine's lakes without political constraints or the worry of losing government funding. Landmark law suits, the "Milfoil Bill" and the Maine Lake Science Center were facilitated by our autonomy and the willingness to take calculated risks."

-Peter Lowell, LEA's first and long-time Executive Director



"Congratulations to Lakes Environmental Association for 5 decades of implementing local lake protections, monitoring lake water quality, educating people from kindergarten age to retirees about how lakes work, and your efforts to see important pieces of lake protection legislation passed. LEA's endeavors to get lake researchers in Maine together to discuss emerging issues and explore opportunities for collaboration has greatly benefited the lakes community. Southwestern Maine is very fortunate to have such a strong lake advocacy group in the region."

*-Linda Bacon,
Maine DEP*



"I have been a family member and supporter of LEA since 1971. For half a century LEA has helped us and our neighbors use best practices for camp road maintenance, land use, and sewage control to protect our pond. LEA's routine water quality monitoring and annual lake report keep our lake association well informed about what we need to do to maintain the high water quality we enjoy. We value the peace, tranquility, and the emotional health our pond provides. Truly, the work of LEA has made this possible."

-Orrin Shane, Past LEA Board President

Lakes Environmental Association has been the voice of lake and watershed protection in southwestern Maine for the last half century. In another 50 years, our lakes will still be around...but in what shape will they be? Will they still be the clear, sparkling waters they are today? Or will some of our lakes succumb to algae blooms and invasive plants? LEA has played a key role in keeping our waters clean from 1970-2020, but we need your help to make sure we can continue this important work for the next 50 years.

