

Maranacook Watershed News

A Publication of the Maranacook Lake Association

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Issue 20



A Brief History of the MLA

Why do we have a lake association and how did ours come into being? Lake Maranacook has been a popular summer destination for years. If you look back into the 1950s, only a handful of people lived year round on Lake Maranacook, but that population was growing.

The only paved roads with proximity to the lake were Route 41 near the west shore in Winthrop and Route 17 at the Readfield end. All other access was on dirt roads for seasonal camps, cottages, and hotels which had been here for years. Some belonged to townspeople who might come for a weekend or a few weeks of vacation. Others were from "away", as close as Augusta or even out of state.

Outhouses were common and although a public sewer and water system on Memorial Drive came much later, outhouses endured into the 1980s. Our population was more mobile by the 1960s and places "got fixed up," winterized or completely rebuilt without much regulation. Still there was no Maranacook Lake Association, although the Annabessacook Lake Association started in 1967 in response to serious pollution problems there.

A 1971 act of the Maine Legislature enabling the formation of watershed districts led to the 1973 formation of The Cobbossee Watershed District; it is believed to have been the first of its kind. 1971 also saw the informal birth of a Maranacook Lake Association, with its formal incorporation in July of 1974.

The MLA addressed water quality, mainly because of inadequate septic systems on small waterfront lots. At that time, the general public was not aware of other issues such as agricultural run-off, invasive plants, and road erosion.

Loss of trees along the shorefront and subsurface rock hazards inspired association members to rehabilitate a boat with a winch for helping property owners clean up fallen trees and for setting out homemade hazard marker buoys. Volunteers continued to maintain the buoys until the late 1980s when the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife took over. Formal administration of the association became dormant by about 1985.

On September 28, 2004, a group of 50 people gathered and reviewed the history of the Maranacook Lake Association back to the formal incorporation in 1974. With the support of the Friends of the Cobbossee Watershed, this public meeting resulted in a reenergized MLA, with an interim steering committee.

The steering committee re-established the collection of dues and decided that the officers would serve as directors. A Nominating Committee presented a list of names with the intent that the board be equally represented by Readfield and Winthrop residents. The new directors set the revision of the bylaws and formulation of a mission statement as first priority, and they accomplished those goals by a meeting on May 10, 2005 prior to the annual meeting. They also established a system for the rotation of officers, all for the approval of the membership at the annual meeting. The MLA was up and running again. "The mission of the Association is to protect and improve the water quality of Maranacook Lake and its watershed for the benefit of all."



Maranacook Lake Association - Membership

Your dues and contributions will be used to further our Mission to protect and improve the water quality of Maranacook Lake and its watershed for the benefit of all. Please help us to recruit new members to protect and enjoy this wonderful resource we call Maranacook Lake. If you have already paid your 2013 dues, thank you for continuing your support.



News from Cobbossee Watershed District

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MARANACOOK LAKE LEVEL CONTROL

The Maranacook Lake Association (MLA) and the Cobbossee Watershed District (CWD) are discussing preferred water levels for Maranacook Lake and changes to dam operations to achieve these goals. Lake levels are controlled primarily by nature, as the amount and frequency of rainfall, and the soil type, slope, and size of the watershed, determines runoff.

The dam at the south end of Maranacook Lake can control the lake level to some degree. Water flows over the dam into Mill Stream, which runs through downtown Winthrop and into Annabessacook Lake. The dam is a concrete structure with two adjustable components that can be operated to affect the water flow to a rather limited degree. A gate on one side of the spillway (top of the dam) can be opened and closed, and on another section, at the other side of the spillway, ten-inch-high boards can be placed or removed to alter the amount of water being released. The Maranacook Lake Dam is owned by the Towns of Winthrop and Readfield, and, the Winthrop Public Works Department maintains and operates the dam.

The CWD measures water levels, sets seasonal water level standards for the lake, and coordinates dam operations with the Public Works Dept. The MLA brings lake level concerns to the CWD and the dam owners, resulting in a broad network of people working for the best possible water levels management at Maranacook Lake. The foremost concerns are shorefront flooding and erosion, which impacts shorefront properties and lake water quality. CWD's water level management program seeks to minimize flooding, provide adequate water for recreation, protect fish and wildlife, and provide stable conditions for aquatic life. Flood control at Maranacook Lake is difficult; the outlet channel is narrow for such a large lake, and, the dam design does not provide a large enough control range to quickly pass water pouring into this narrow passageway. The gate is open for most of the year and the boards are rarely placed on the side spillway. Despite this operational readiness for rainfall and runoff, the lake can come up quickly because the dam cannot pass water fast enough.

Summer is the time of year when runoff often is low and the dam can be operated to hold water in the lake. **The MLA Board has thoughtfully considered the idea of keeping the lake a little lower during the summer**, and chose the level of 211 feet above sea level. This level is one foot below the dam's center spillway, and is half-a-foot lower than what CWD has been targeting for a summer water level. **CWD has explained to the Board how the new goal might be achieved.** Instead of starting to hold water back early in summer, the gate could remain open longer, and the overflow point set lower, so that the elevation of 211 feet is reached earlier in summer. This will also mean that under normal summer rainfall and evaporation conditions, the lake will likely be a little lower than usual at the end of summer. **This change in summer water levels management could accomplish two things: more shoreline protection from wave-action erosion in summer, and, an increased likelihood of lowering the lake in September to protect against high water from fall rainstorms.** Spring flood conditions would only be minimally affected by this plan.

Let's put 211 feet above sea level in perspective. Example 1: Last summer, the level of Maranacook Lake was at 211 feet, plus or minus two inches, from July 23rd through October 4th. Maybe you remember what the level was like during that two to three month period, and whether you have any positive or negative observations regarding that level. At all other times in 2012 the lake level was higher than 211 feet. Example 2: As I am writing this today, May 20th, the lake level is 211.62 feet above sea level. This is a bit more than seven inches higher than the summer target level of 211 feet.

MLA and CWD will be working with this summer water levels management idea and reviewing its pros and cons as time goes on. We look forward to receiving any questions or comments. See the spring greetings insert for more CWD news! *Wendy Dennis*

WATER QUALITY Off to a great start! The first water clarity reading in 2013 for Maranacook Lake, south basin, was 6.8 meters (22 feet) on May 15th. This measurement was taken by CWD Trustee Joe Saunders, a seasoned volunteer monitor, but new to volunteering on Maranacook Lake.

CWD ANNUAL BUDGET MEETING **MAY 29th**, 7:00 p.m., Winthrop Middle School. Please come and vote on CWD's 2013-14 fiscal budget, hear Dr. David Courtemanch's presentation "Back to the Future: Lakes, Eutrophication, Algae Blooms, and Fish Kills", and celebrate 40 years of lake protection and restoration by CWD.



“About the Friends”

The Friends of the Cobbossee Watershed (Friends) was established in 2001 as a citizen-based effort to complement the Cobbossee Watershed Districts mission to “Protect & Improve the 28 Lakes & Streams of the Cobbossee Watershed”, a 217-mile drainage basin located in the Kennebec Valley of central Maine.

In 2002 operations began with the launching of the “OTTER”, a 20’ pontoon boat that sold ice cream while providing education and outreach to hundreds of lake residents. Today, the “OTTER II” plies the waters of 11 lakes during the summer while making numerous appearances at community fairs, parades and festivals. The annual “Friends on the 4th” 5K, started in 2003 with 97 participants, will attract over 600 entries this year, making it the largest road race held in central Maine.

Innovative approaches like these have resulted in phenomenal growth of our programs. Our year-round environmental education offerings annually teach over 1,400 area youth “why” we must protect our precious watershed by getting kids out of the classroom and into the natural world for a real life experience to complement the science base they acquire in class.

The “Watershed Science Program” features classroom and field based lessons for students in grades preK-12, and connects state learning standards to the real-world issues surrounding water quality. “Outside After School” incorporates exercise and nature appreciation while building social skills exploring and playing outdoors. Combined, these programs have been offered to more than 14 schools throughout the Cobbossee Watershed, at little or no cost to the schools. During school vacations, the Friends combine fun and learning in their “Tadpole Patrol” and “Nature Day Camps” programs. Utilizing the “OTTER II” as our “floating classroom” Tadpole Patrol engages youth in observing lake ecosystems and wildlife while learning how to determine lake health. Nature Day Camps focuses on traditional Maine outdoor activities like fishing (ice & open water), snowshoeing, swimming & hiking, while learning outdoor and nature related skills.

During the summer, the organization employs 30+ local high school and college students (often alumni of one or more of the Friends educational programs) who are achieving some real results against the major threats facing our watershed: non-point source (NPS) pollution and invasive aquatic plants (IAP).

Our “Lake-Smart-Start!” and “Slow-the-Flow” programs are staffed by members of our Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) who combat the sources of NPS pollution. Since 2003, YCC members have completed over 200 projects on 14 different water bodies of the Cobbossee Watershed, protecting nearly 5 miles of fragile shoreline.

Our “MilFoiler” program employs additional students and consists of a coordinated, 3-tiered approach for the entire watershed designed to keep existing infestations from entering non-infested waters while limiting further impact where they already exist. Courtesy Boat Inspectors inspect boats and educate the public on the dangers of IAP’s at area boat launches. Started in 2003 with 400 inspections at four area launches, Friends CBI’s inspect nearly 9,000 boats at ten public launch sites each year. Spreading of IAP populations is carefully monitored via the Youth Plant Patrol team. And known infestations are combatted using a combination of hand pulling along shorelines, a scuba Diver Assisted Suction Harvester that removes plants from deeper waters, and placing milfoil mats on patches to block sunlight.

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Photo by Sheila Dorey

“About the Friends” (Continued from page 3)

With an engaged membership of over 7,000 members, generous support from the local businesses community, towns, and lake associations and grants from established foundations like the Unity Foundation, L.L. Bean, Davis Conservation Foundation, Quimby Family Foundation, Oak Grove School Foundation, Augusta Kiwanis and Boat U.S. Foundation, the Friends are galvanizing community support for the protection of this vital natural resource.

FMI on the work of the Friends, or to find out how you can be involved, please contact:

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