



Lake Waramaug Task Force News

A Newsletter of the Lake Waramaug Task Force, Inc.

Summer 2006

Lake Waramaug Task Force, Inc.

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The Lake Waramaug Task Force is a non-profit organization dedicated to restoring and maintaining lake ecology and water quality of Lake Waramaug and its watershed.

Dear Friends of Lake Waramaug:

Each year at Waramaug we must deal with a different set of “gremlins” who like to throw stones in the path of our progress in restoring and protecting Lake Waramaug and its watershed.

In the enclosed newsletter we explain more about this year’s chief “gremlins” - the weather pattern (again) and the legislature. Our weather problems are the unusual lack of ice cover in the winter and constant May and June rain. Our State legislature in this past legislative session simply took no action on a comprehensive bill designed to strengthen a much needed state program to stop the spread of invasive water weeds.

At the same time each year we have new “lake heroes” - people who make major contributions to help us reach our goals. This year we have the pleasure of telling you about the largest land preservation donation in the history of Lake Waramaug!

Lake Waramaug and its watershed is an important and complex resource. It is the State’s second largest natural lake with a surface area of 692 acres and an average depth of 25 feet. The lake borders three towns, has a 14 square mile watershed and has been called one of the most beautiful lakes in the world.

Protecting this special resource is a time consuming and costly job that requires:

- Employing lake scientists to monitor the lake and to help us continually improve the lake’s water clarity and quality.
- Working hard locally to maintain our invasive weed protection program and on a broader scale to create a comprehensive state-wide weed protection program
- Increasing our commitment to work with town land use boards and lake watershed property owners to insure that new development is designed to protect water quality.

We have made progress on all these fronts, but can not afford to rest on our laurels. The lake environment is constantly changing and the “gremlins” always pitching new stones in our path.

Please fill out the enclosed donation envelope and give generously to preserve this wonderful lake.

Sincerely,

Thomas A.J. McGowan
Executive Director

David Robinson
Treasurer

Little Ice Cover This Winter - Heavy Rains This Spring Does it Spell Summer Trouble?

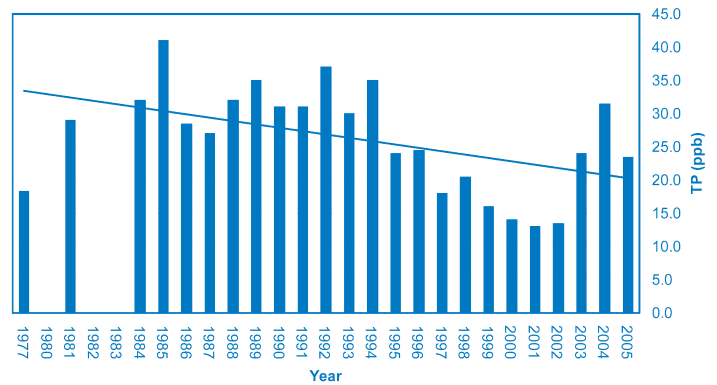
It is perhaps more difficult this year than ever to predict lake conditions in the coming months. Our chief science advisor, Dr. Kortmann, observed that the unusual absence of full lake ice cover this past winter could mean the lake will warm earlier than usual, perhaps jump-starting algae growth. Adding to this concern is the wash-off from the deluge of rain in May and early June.

Our scientists report that through the end of May lake conditions are stable and in line with recent year trends. Clarity in May was 6 feet with good oxygen levels and no other alarming findings reported by the scientists. But June started off with a “gully-wumper” of a rain storm, followed by another heavy rain event on June 7. This type of storm washes sediment and algae feeding phosphorus into the lake from farms, lawns and roads. It will be one or two weeks before we know the effect of these rains on lake clarity.

What we do know is that the level of phosphorus in the Spring has been higher in recent years than in the past. This is an important factor and it has translated into a “leveling” of the water clarity in recent years as shown on the chart below.

We are watching phosphorus trends closely and will keep you posted with additional mailings and our soon to be launched Lake Waramaug web site.

Lake Waramaug Spring Total Phosphorus 1m & 3m



Lawn Zero Phosphorus Fertilizer

Phosphorus does not break down well in soil thus it ends up in the ground water that flows into the lake. Because Waramaug is already phosphorus nutrient rich (which causes excessive algae and aquatic weed growth) we strongly discourage use of lawn fertilizers near the lake.

On any lawn near the lake or a feeder stream property owners should use “zero percent” phosphorus fertilizer. The middle number on the bag is the phosphorus amount (e.g. 27-0-3). It is available if you ask for it at your lawn supply outlet or tell your applicator you want only lake friendly “zero percent” phosphorus fertilizer.

Lake Saving Lawn Care Practices:

- Consider smaller lawns with shrub borders or native plantings to replace the lawn area
- Choose grass and/or groundcover that minimizes maintenance, fertilizer and pesticide application
- Consider allowing natural vegetation to reestablish itself
- Water infrequently but thoroughly
- Mow only when necessary—the ideal height for healthy grass is 2.5-3 inches.
- Use non-motorized lawn mowers for small lawns
- Leave grass clippings on the lawn
- Avoid using fertilizers and broadleaf herbicides
- Pull weeds by hand in small yards

Summer Intern James Hicks

This summer a student intern James “Jamie” Hicks, an undergraduate student at Duke University and lake area resident, will be helping the Task Force. In addition to conducting weekly lake monitoring and shoreline surveys of the lake for invasive weeds he will work on several special projects. One involves talking with lake leaders around the State to gather information on the spread of invasive lake plants for presentation to legislators this fall.



Lake Area Land Preservation The Greatest Gift for Future Generations

In recent years generous lake area land owners have donated valuable properties for permanent preservation. This includes:

- A conservation easement protecting land on Tanner Hill by Graham and Kay Brush to the Warren Land Trust,
- A conservation easement from John Stiteler and Ellen Giddens to the Steep Rock Association on a portion of their land off Tinker Hill Road,
- Gifts of land and conservation easements by Bud and

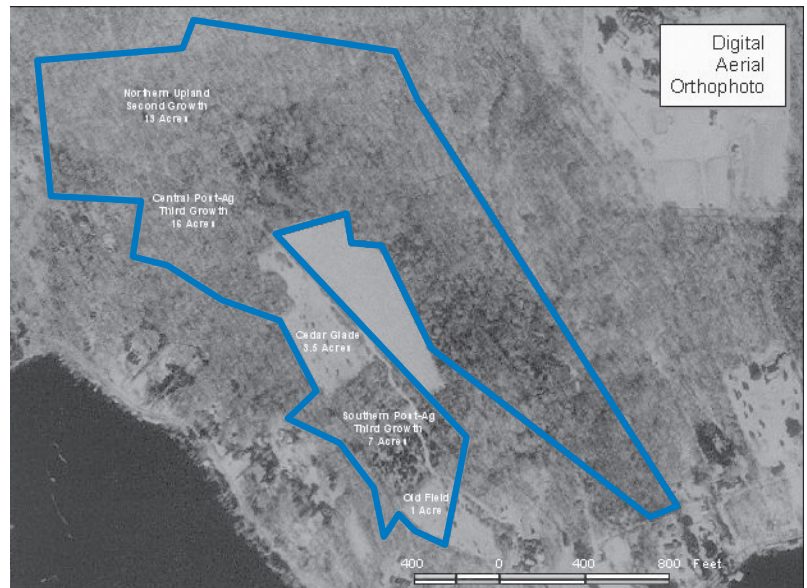
Helene Pennington and Al and Cate Allured on beautiful parcels of land between Bliss Road and North Shore Road in Warren to the Weantinoge Heritage land trust and the Lake Waramaug Task Force.

Add to these the State's purchase of 66 acres overlooking the lake to expand the Mt. Bushnell State Park in New Preston and we can now see real progress toward our dream of protecting critical open spaces that will preserve water quality and the scenic beauty that makes Waramaug one of the world's most beautiful lakes.

Recently this goal received another huge boost - Lee and Cynthia Vance have permanently protected 65 acres of land off North Shore Road in Warren with a gift to the Weantinoge Heritage land trust! This is without a doubt the largest parcel of land ever protected near the lake shore and one of the most scenic and historic properties on the lake.

The Vance's have named this two part gift in honor of the Bonyng Family who owned the property from 1896 to 1984. The first piece, now owned by the land trust, preserves 27 acres of undisturbed wetlands and mature forest along Hawes Brook, an important feeder stream entering the lake after passing under North Shore Road adjacent to the Allen home.

The second piece, a 38 acre parcel, is protected under an agricultural and conservation easement donated to the trust. It preserves the high land above homes on North Shore Road from Hawes Brook almost to Arrowpoint and protects outstanding scenic and environmentally rich lands including scenic fields and farm soils, mature forests and valuable wildlife habitat.



The Legacy Corner

Each year the Lake Waramaug Task Force, Inc. receives many generous cash gifts that support our ongoing costs. However, we would be remiss if we did not ask you to also consider other ways of making a gift or bequest to the Task Force.

The Legacy Corner offers information on making a gift or bequest to the Task Force. In the last issue we talked bequests in a Will - a specific dollar amount, an appreciated stock or even a percentage of the remaining estate after all other specific bequests have been made.

Now we take this option a step further. When planning a charitable bequest to support the mission of the Task Force you may also consider these possibilities:

1. Unrestricted bequest. This is a gift for our general purposes, to be used at the discretion of our board. A gift like this—without conditions attached—is frequently the most useful, as it allows us to determine the wisest and most pressing need for the funds at the time of receipt.

2. Restricted bequest. This type of gift allows you to specify how the funds are to be used. Perhaps you have a special purpose or project in mind. If so, it's best to consult us when you make your will to be certain your intent can be carried out.

3. Honorary or memorial bequest. This is a gift given "in honor of" or "in memory of" someone. We are pleased to honor your request and have many ways to grant appropriate recognition.

4. Endowed bequest. This bequest allows you to restrict the principal of your gift, requiring us to hold the funds permanently and use only the investment income they generate. Creating an endowment in this manner means that your gift can continue giving indefinitely.

As always please see your attorney or financial advisor for professional assistance on all estate planning matters.

Systems are Running and Hank's on the Job

Our main defenses, the Waramaug in-lake systems, were turned on in early June. Hank Vallely continues to monitor the operation of these two in-lake layer aeration systems. One is located off Route 45, the second is the Bob Frost pumping station at Arrowpoint. Hank will also continue to supervise check boats entering the lake for invasive plants for the Town at its boat launch at the Washington beach.

Washington's Boat Inspection is Saving the Lake

The major reason Waramaug has avoided invasive plants is the Town of Washington's invasive weed boat inspection program. The protective value of a boat inspection was validated in a recent report on a state wide program in New Hampshire.

Last year New Hampshire paid 149 boat inspectors called "Lake Hosts" who worked with 167 volunteers to inspect 25,798 boats at public boat launches throughout the State. 785 boats (3.1%) were found to be carrying vegetation. Most were benign native but invasive plants were discovered and removed from boats entering at six lakes.

The report states "With the removal of these invasive plants from boats and trailers about to launch on a public water body, Lake Hosts played a vital role in sparing these lakes from infestations of invasive plants that can seriously compromise a lake's ecological, recreational, and economic value."

A primary goal of the New Hampshire "Lake Host" program is to teach boaters where to look for plants on their boats and trailers, and impress upon them the importance of conducting self-inspections every time they enter, and leave, a water body. The report concluded that "the number of boats with plant "hitchhikers" was down slightly this summer over last year indicating that boaters are getting the message about the importance of inspecting their boats."

A study by the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station demonstrated that invasive plants typically first take hold near a boat ramp. Connecticut needs an inspection program at all its public boat launches to control the spread of invasive plants.

Boat Inspection and Cleaning Procedures for Preventing Spread of Invasive Plants

- Inspect boats and trailers thoroughly, and remove any aquatic weeds before leaving any water body.
- Dump leftover bait on land, away from the water.
- Rinse boats, trailers and equipment (including live-wells, bilge, and cooling systems).
- Dry boats, motors, trailers and equipment thoroughly in the hot sun before using them again.



More Legislative Action on Invasive Plants Needed

We hope the facts in the Hick's report will encourage the legislature to fund a full time State Invasive Plant Coordinator and put more teeth into the State law banning invasive plants. Last year a bill to do this was left on the floor of the legislature!

Everyone concerned about Connecticut lakes needs to tell their legislators: "Give Connecticut a fighting chance to stem the tide against invasive aquatic weeds. Pass this bill in the fall and give Connecticut what every other New England State already has - a State invasive plant education and prevention program. Connecticut can not afford to do less."

Andrew W. Roraback

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Shoreline "Weed Free Zone" Demonstration Project

The Waramaug restoration program has improved water clarity - allowing greater light penetration along shorelines. The downside of our success is there are more native shoreline weeds. Better clarity means greater light penetration allowing plants to root at greater depths. Lake surface algae is blown into "wind fetch" corners on the shoreline where it collects on weeds creating such unpleasant conditions that some lake owners are considering applying chemicals or dredging their shorelines.

In response the Task Force asked Dr. Kortmann to devise alternative non chemical, ecologically friendly methods to create a weed free zone on a lake shoreline for swimmers and boaters. Dr. Kortmann has developed promising concepts which we will test this summer. If the results are positive we will recommend use of these low environmental impact, less costly options next year.