



Belgrade Lakes Association

— Maine's Oldest Lake Association —

— 2026 —
ANNUAL REPORT
TO THE MEMBERSHIP



*Working Together to Keep Long Pond and
Great Pond Clean, Healthy, and Beautiful
for Future Generations*

President's Letter

As we make our way through another beautiful Maine summer, I find myself reflecting on what makes the Belgrade Lakes Association successful. The answer is simple: people who care enough to get involved.

For more than a century, the Belgrade Lakes Association has worked to protect the health of Great Pond, Long Pond, and the surrounding watershed. While our mission has remained constant, the challenges facing our lakes continue to evolve. Today, invasive species, development pressure, aging infrastructure, changing weather patterns, and declining water quality require more attention than ever before. Meeting those challenges takes commitment, strong partnerships, and a membership that believes these lakes are worth protecting.

Over the past year, we continued to make meaningful progress. Courtesy Boat Inspectors and volunteers remained the first line of defense against invasive aquatic species. We expanded educational outreach, supported water quality initiatives, engaged with local and state leaders on issues affecting our lakes, and continued advocating for practical, science-based solutions. Every project is guided by one goal: leaving these lakes healthier and better protected than we found them.

None of this happens alone. We are fortunate to work alongside outstanding partners, including the 7 Lakes Alliance, our local towns, state agencies, conservation organizations, businesses, and other community groups. Together, we accomplish far more than any organization could on its own, and we are grateful for their shared commitment to protecting the Belgrade Lakes region.

I also want to recognize the dedication of our Board of Directors and volunteers. Whether serving on committees, staffing events, monitoring shorelines, educating boaters, or representing the Association in the community, they strengthen this organization every day.

Most importantly, thank you to our members. Your membership is the foundation of everything we do. It provides the resources needed to protect water quality, educate the public, support conservation initiatives, and respond to new challenges. Simply put, none of this work is possible without your support.

Many of you also choose to give beyond your annual membership. Those additional contributions have an immediate and lasting impact, allowing us to invest in critical programs, respond to emerging needs, and pursue opportunities that would otherwise be beyond our reach. Whether your contribution is large or small, it reflects a shared commitment to the future of these lakes, and for that, we are sincerely grateful.



BLA volunteers pose with Santa & Mrs. Clause at 7 Lakes Inn, as a part of the Holiday Stroll

Looking ahead, our work is far from finished. Protecting these lakes requires long-term commitment, sound science, and a willingness to tackle difficult issues. While new challenges will continue to emerge, I am confident that, with the continued support of our members, volunteers, partners, and donors, the Belgrade Lakes Association is well positioned to meet them.

I want to leave you with this reassurance: our organization is strong. We are financially responsible, supported by an engaged membership, dedicated volunteers, and exceptional partnerships throughout the region. Just as importantly, Great Pond and Long Pond remain among Maine's most treasured natural resources.

At the same time, we cannot afford to become complacent. Protecting these waters requires constant vigilance, continued investment, and a community willing to act before problems become crises. Every membership renewed, every donation made, every volunteer hour given, and every partnership strengthened helps ensure future generations will enjoy these lakes as we do today.

Thank you for your confidence in the Belgrade Lakes Association and for your continued investment in our mission. Together, we are not simply preserving what we have; we are building a stronger future for Great Pond, Long Pond, and the entire Belgrade Lakes region.

Respectfully,

Richard

Richard LaBelle

Annual Report on Water Quality

Protecting the water quality of Great and Long Ponds remains one of the BLA's highest priorities. Water quality is measured in many ways, including water clarity, phosphorus concentrations, and the presence of invasive aquatic plants. These indicators help us evaluate the health of our lakes and guide restoration and protection efforts.

The information is provided in conjunction with our partners at 7 Lakes Alliance (7LA). While much progress has been made, protecting our lakes requires an ongoing commitment. Erosion, stormwater runoff, and invasive species continue to pose significant threats, making prevention, monitoring, and restoration essential every year.

Water Quality

Dr. Danielle Wain summarized the current status of Great and Long Ponds:

- Phosphorus concentrations in both basins of Long Pond have exceeded the target established in the watershed management plan.
- Great Pond remains off pace in meeting both its water clarity and phosphorus reduction goals.
- Great Pond is a significant source of phosphorus flowing into Long Pond, meaning elevated phosphorus levels in Great Pond can directly affect Long Pond's water quality.
- Although Great Pond has not yet reached its management targets, it continues to have the second-best water quality among the Belgrade Lakes, behind only Long Pond.
- While current measurements have not yet reached target levels, that does not mean restoration efforts are off track. Great Pond has an average water residence time of approximately two years, meaning improvements in the watershed may take several years before they are reflected in water quality. By comparison, Long Pond has a residence time of approximately four months, allowing improvements to become visible much more quickly.

Invasive Aquatic Plant Management

Sharon Mann provided the following update on invasive aquatic plant management:

The field season is officially underway, and all three 7 Lakes Alliance dive teams are fully deployed. This year, dedicated crews are working on Messalonskee Lake, North and East Ponds, and Great Pond. It has been several years since Great Pond has had a dedicated crew, as previous staffing was divided between Great Pond and curly-leaf pondweed projects. (BLA funding supports work on Great and Long Pond projects only.)

This season's primary objectives are to respond quickly if variable-leaf milfoil reappears in Great Meadow Stream while conducting the most comprehensive survey of North Bay in recent years. North Bay alone contains more than 200 acres of shallow, heavily vegetated habitat, making it one of the highest-priority areas for early detection.

Current Management Sites

Since the season began, the Great Pond Crew has worked at the following locations:

- Great Meadow Stream: Excellent condition; approximately 5 gallons of variable-leaf milfoil removed.
- Rome Trout Brook: Conditions remain normal.
- Robbins Mill Stream: Excellent condition; approximately 2 gallons removed.
- North Bay: Shoreline perimeter survey completed; three plants detected. Survey crews are now examining the remaining 200-acre interior.
- Swan Brook: Excellent condition.
- Finger Reef: No variable-leaf milfoil detected since 2023.
- The Lagoon: Only one to two plants have been found annually since 2023.

All management sites are monitored weekly or biweekly depending on plant density. The initial round of plant removals has been completed, and crews will continue routine maintenance while shifting increasing attention toward early detection. Throughout the remainder of the season, divers will survey the entire shoreline and littoral zones of both Great and Long Ponds for all 15 invasive aquatic plant species on Maine's watch list.

Early detection remains one of the most effective and cost-efficient methods of protecting our lakes. Finding new infestations while they are still small allows them to be contained—or even eradicated—before they become widespread, preserving both the ecological health and recreational value of our lakes.

Courtesy Boat Inspection Program

Prevention at public boat launches continues to serve as the first line of defense against invasive species.

So far this season, Courtesy Boat Inspectors at Great and Long Ponds have:

- Inspected more than 3,400 boats
- Removed 84 plant fragments from boats and trailers

One of those fragments was confirmed by Josie Miller to be variable-leaf milfoil originating from Messalonskee Lake. Interceptions like this demonstrate the importance of the Courtesy Boat Inspection Program by preventing invasive species from becoming established in Great and Long Ponds.

However, many boats enter the lakes from private camps, marinas, and informal launch sites where inspectors are not present, including the Route 225 bridge. For that reason, prevention cannot rely solely on boat inspections. By locating and removing invasive aquatic plants before they produce fragments capable of spreading to new locations, dive crews provide a critical second line of defense throughout the watershed.

Watershed Restoration Projects

Stuart Cole and the Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) continue to make excellent progress on erosion control projects, while Lynn Geiger is coordinating Clean Water Act Section 319 grants and overseeing additional watershed restoration efforts.

Long Pond

Youth Conservation Corps

- 7 completed projects implementing 11 best management practices
- 3 projects currently underway
- 11 additional projects scheduled

Clean Water Act Section 319 Grants

- Echo Valley Estates, Road and Driveway Improvements
 - More than \$19,000 invested in road improvements
 - Installation of three cross-culverts
 - Installation of three driveway culverts
 - Six loads of bluestone gravel used to elevate and resurface the roadway
- Echo Valley Outfall Sediment Pools
 - \$3,500 project
 - Installation of two sediment collection pools to treat stormwater runoff before it enters the lake

Potential Future Section 319 Projects

- Peninsula Drive
- Lakeshore Drive, driveway improvements
- Long Pond Beach parking lot
- French Mountain Trailhead parking lot
- Porcupine Ridge culvert replacement

Great Pond

Youth Conservation Corps

- 7 completed projects implementing 11 best management practices
- 5 projects currently underway
- 19 additional projects scheduled

Looking Ahead

The health of Great Pond and Long Pond depends on sustained, long-term stewardship. Water quality improvements often take years to become measurable, particularly in lakes such as Great Pond with long water residence times. Continued investment in erosion control, invasive species management, watershed restoration, and public education remains essential to protecting these lakes for future generations.

The Belgrade Lakes Association is grateful for the outstanding work of our partners at 7 Lakes Alliance, the Youth Conservation Corps, volunteers, property owners, and supporters whose efforts continue to safeguard these exceptional natural resources. Financial support for the BLA plays a vital role in this work. Through our partnership with 7 Lakes Alliance, BLA funding helps make possible many of the on-the-ground projects and scientific initiatives that protect water quality. By investing through the BLA, donors help ensure that resources remain focused on the needs of Great Pond and Long Pond—the lakes we were founded to protect. At the same time, that support enables the BLA to advocate for these lakes, engage with local and state leaders, educate the public, and serve as an independent voice dedicated to preserving the health, beauty, and legacy of Great Pond and Long Pond for generations to come.

Bert Languet
Chair, Water Quality Committee

Loons and the Canary in the Coalmine

We are so fortunate here in the Belgrade Lakes, Long and Great Pond in particular, that we can actually revel in an overabundance of an adult loon population. Between Long and Great Pond, we have twenty-six established loon territories, give or take one or two and approximately one hundred and ten adult loons competing every year for those twenty-six territories. Our native chick productivity is, unfortunately, very low and those that make it to the Great Fly-Off in October, is even lower which requires further study.

So, our overabundance of adult loon begs the question, why are WE so honored? Our neighbors to the south, from Connecticut, Massachusetts to southern Maine are seeing a distinct and documented loss of their loon population due to poor water quality and general loss of habitat. Here in the Belgrades, we are ‘enjoying’ an increase in our loon, eagle, osprey and fisheries population due to our relatively good water quality and breeding habitat. In 2025, our colleagues at BioDiversity Research Institute (BRI) in Portland, enlisted the services of the BLA Loon Project and their Colby College Summer Loon Interns to survey an eagle nest on upper Long Pond to collect, quantify and band one or two eaglets for potential PFAS and heavy metals contamination. What they discovered were three eaglets in the nest which is highly unusual. When I questioned the technician, I was told that it was most likely due to our good water quality and breeding habitat that enabled such productivity.



2025 Colby College BLA Loon Project Interns

So, why does 'everyone' want to be here in the Belgrades? Long and Great Pond, in particular? Because, if you compare our water quality and habitat to those of our neighbors to the south and even throughout Kennebec and neighboring counties, our water quality is exemplary, clear and clean, due to the efforts of the oldest Lakes organization in the State, the Belgrade Lakes Association. No one else is dedicated to ensuring that the quality and legacy remain so.

Our real estate inventory remains low which is advantageous for existing residents because, our residents, visitors, like our wildlife, recognize the Pearl of the Region. And this, once again, is a result of the efforts of your BLA. Our objective and mission has been, since its inception in 1908, "To protect and improve the watershed of Great and Long Pond through Preservation, Education and Action". The BLA has been actively protecting our investment in this legacy while proactively monitoring and assisting, where necessary, its wildlife for the past 118 years and we are positioned for another 118!

Our success has only been possible with your continued allegiance and support. For that, we are forever grateful and appreciative. If there is anything else we can do, please let us know.

Dick Greenan
Chair, BLA Loon Preservation Committee

Thank you to our 2026 Annual Meeting Sponsors



Finance Committee

The five members of the Belgrade Lakes Association (BLA) Finance Committee submit this communication to the 2026 Annual Report. The Finance Committee members are all BLA Board members: John Atkinson (Committee Chair), Blaine Horrocks (Treasurer), Trent Shute, Steve Smith (Secretary), and Suni Thakor.

Treasurer Horrocks prepares detailed monthly reports for review at the Association's monthly Board meetings. Reserves are managed internally in accordance with a detailed Investment Policy Statement (available to members by request). The Association is fortunate to have two Committee members who have lengthy private sector experience in managing financial assets. We include the current balance sheet as of June 30, 2026, for your review.

Recent history:

2010 / 2011 - The Belgrade Lakes Association was responsible for managing the financing and construction of the Maine Lakes Resource Center (MLRC) in Belgrade Lakes village. The BLA transferred ownership of this building to the Belgrade Regional Conservation Alliance which ultimately developed into the headquarters of the 7 Lakes Alliance. Membership contributions were critical to this accomplishment.

In the years that followed, BLA's finances were challenged by the emerging infestation of Variable Leaf Milfoil on Great Pond. The BLA was the lead financial contributor in combatting and eventually controlling this invasive plant. Once again, membership contributions were critical to getting this aggressive invasive plant under control.

Thanks to your membership contributions, the Association continues to maintain a strong financial position allowing it to fund ongoing programs beneficial to both Great and Long Ponds as detailed throughout this Annual Report.

Balance Sheet

as of June 30, 2026

	TOTAL
ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Bank Accounts	
11000 Skowhegan Savings Bank Accounts	269,393.58
13102 Cash Box	100.00
PayPal Account	91.14
Total Bank Accounts	\$269,584.72
Other Current Assets	
Charles Schwabb - Milfoil	148,178.53
Charles Schwabb - Reserve	812,506.09
Total Other Current Assets	\$960,684.62
Total Current Assets	\$1,230,269.34
TOTAL ASSETS	\$1,230,269.34
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Credit Cards	
BLA Visa Card - Blaine	645.09
Total Credit Cards	\$645.09
Total Current Liabilities	\$645.09
Total Liabilities	\$645.09
Equity	
32000 Net Assets 2011	878,723.04
Schwabb Mark to Market	184,671.61
WF Mrk to Mrket History	109,634.88
Net Income	56,594.72
Total Equity	\$1,229,624.25
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	\$1,230,269.34

Membership & Community Engagement

As Maine's oldest lake association, our membership has remained stable for the past few years with numbers in the low-500 range. Our minimum membership fee is \$25, as we want to welcome everyone through the door; however, our average donation is slightly over \$100. One area of concern is our inability to enroll the next generation of our current members. Many adult children who have come to the Belgrades for years are not joining our organization. We need your help! Consider including a BLA membership in your holiday shopping. We estimate there are over 1,800 waterfront landowners on Great Pond and Long Pond, but less than 30% are members. Again, please encourage your friends and neighbors to be a part of our important work to maintain and improve the water quality of our special place.

The BLA is actively working to expand our presence in the community. Last December, we participated in the Holiday Stroll in the village. We shared space with Santa and his wife and set up a wheel for the kiddos to spin for a lake-focused prize. This provided another opportunity to discuss our work with a new group of residents as the parents are usually with their children.

This Memorial Day Weekend we held our third annual get-together at The Village Inn, providing a time to meet and greet friends returning to the lake. It is always a good way to kick off the season. Please mark your calendars for 2027 and look for a date and location to be announced.

In working to reach the younger generation, we have initiated work with Belgrade Central School to foster interest in lake quality with area children. In early June, we coordinated with the Belgrade Historical Society's field trip for the fourth-grade classes to the village. The day started at Peninsula Park with a discussion of the history of Belgrade mills, including the fact it was not very healthy for Long Pond. The walk ended up at the Village Green where the BLA provided lunch for the group, together with a fun presentation by our Loon Guru, Dick Greenan. The kids loved his talk about loons and focused that loons (and other living things) do not like dirty water.

Each of the students wrote a thank you note following the lunch and presentation. “Thank you for the tour and the lunch. My favorite part was talking about the loons and the wood ducks....” We are excited to be sponsoring events in each of the other grades (K-5) this fall.

We established a \$2,500 Belgrade Lakes Association scholarship for students focused on continuing their education in the sciences. This year, there were two wonderfully-qualified students which necessitated our splitting the award. The recipients are Deirdre D’Amico who will be attending the University of Southern Maine majoring in Biotechnology, and Logan Baron who will be attending the University of New Hampshire majoring in Biomedical Science. This award will be offered to residents of our lake community (Belgrade, Rome, and Mount Vernon), and we hope that with the generosity of our members, the BLA will be able to strengthen the level of financial assistance we’re able to offer continuing students.

This year, the BLA took the lead in sponsoring the July 4th boat parade in the Mill Stream. It was a lot of fun, and if you stayed dry, you obviously were not close enough to the action! Over 75 dry bags were tossed aboard with BLA-sponsored items!

In August, we will be sponsoring two Wine and Learn Sessions. These will be hosted by Bill and Vicki Mitchell on Long Pond on Tuesday evening, August 11, and by John and Wendy Schlosser on Great Pond on August 19. There will be a social time along with a chance to engage with Dr. Danielle Wain and others from our partner, 7 Lakes Alliance. Details and registration can be found on our website.

We will continue to be involved in the local festivities including Oktoberfest and the Holiday Stroll. All these activities allow us to be more present in both the summer and year-round communities. All these activities are a part of our commitment to keeping the BLA an important part of this area for another hundred years!

Stephanie Gardner
Carol Johnson
Co-Chairs, Development Committee

From Planning to Action: **An Update on BLA's Strategic Priorities**

Over the past year, the Belgrade Lakes Association has taken a thoughtful look at where we are as an organization, where we want to go and how we can best serve Great Pond and Long Pond in the years ahead.

That work began with the formation of a Strategic Planning Committee charged with reviewing BLA's mission, priorities and future direction. Following discussions with Board members and others familiar with the opportunities and challenges facing our lakes and organization, the Committee developed a focused Strategic Plan that was reviewed and approved by the Board.

Rather than create a lengthy document destined to sit on a shelf, we intentionally identified three priorities where we believe BLA can make a meaningful difference: **Science-Based Stewardship, Awareness and Community Engagement and Organizational Sustainability and Legacy.**

Most importantly, work is already underway in all three areas.

Our first priority is to build a shared, science-based understanding of the existing condition of Great Pond and Long Pond. To advance that goal, BLA has held several collaborative discussions with the leadership of the 7 Lakes Alliance, along with separate working sessions involving their scientists and staff. The goal is to draw upon the considerable water quality data and expertise already available to establish a clear "State of the Lakes" baseline that can help guide BLA's future priorities, investments and communications.

These conversations also recognize the distinct yet complementary roles of our two organizations. BLA is a member-based, volunteer-led organization focused on protecting and preserving the water quality of Great Pond and Long Pond, while 7LA brings professional scientific and conservation expertise focused on the land and water resources throughout the entire seven-lake watershed. Working collaboratively allows us to combine science, stewardship and community engagement.

Our second priority is expanding awareness and community engagement. Here, too, progress is underway. Recent new outreach efforts have included a presentation and lunch with Belgrade Central’s fifth-grade students and BLA’s sponsorship of the July 4th Boat Parade. These activities may look quite different, but they share an important purpose: connecting more people, and particularly the next generation, to our lakes and the responsibility we all share for their future.

Finally, we are looking ahead to BLA’s long-term organizational and financial sustainability. The Board has engaged a development consultant to help evaluate opportunities and develop plans to strengthen membership, philanthropic support and BLA’s long-term financial foundation.

There is much more work ahead, but we are encouraged by the progress already underway. The Strategic Plan is not intended to be a static document. It is a roadmap for action that will continue to evolve as we learn, engage our members and partners and better understand the opportunities ahead.

As a member-based organization, none of this happens without you. Thank you for your membership, your involvement and your continued commitment to protecting Great Pond and Long Pond for generations to come.



Volunteers Make the Difference!

Volunteers are the heart of the Belgrade Lakes Association. Whether you have just a couple of hours to spare or are looking for a meaningful leadership opportunity, there are many ways to make a difference while helping protect Great Pond, Long Pond, and the surrounding watershed.

If your schedule is limited, consider spending a few hours staffing our raffle table at the Belgrade Post Office or the Farmers' Market, or representing the BLA at community events like the Holiday Stroll, Fall Festival, or other local gatherings. You can also participate in our Adopt-a-Shoreline program, assist with lake cleanups, educational outreach, membership events, or become a Courtesy Boat Inspector to help prevent invasive aquatic plants from entering our lakes.

For members looking to become more involved, BLA offers opportunities to serve on committees focused on membership, communications, fundraising, education, governance, and special events. Those seeking an even greater level of involvement are encouraged to consider serving on the Board of Directors, helping guide the organization's future and ensuring BLA remains a strong voice for conservation.

No matter your schedule, talents, or experience, there is a place for you at the Belgrade Lakes Association. Whether you can give two hours a year or several hours each month, your time and energy help preserve the clean, healthy, and beautiful lakes that bring us all together.



Volunteers Make the Difference

MANY WAYS TO GET INVOLVED WITH BLA

RAFFLE TABLE	Help at the Belgrade Post Office or the Farmers' Market.	EDUCATION & OUTREACH	Assist with programs, presentations, and activities that promote lake stewardship and conservation.
COMMUNITY EVENTS	Staff a BLA table at events like the Holiday Stroll, Fall Festival, and other local gatherings.	MEMBERSHIP & FUNDRAISING	Help with membership outreach, donor appreciation, and fundraising initiatives.
ADOPT-A-SHORELINE	Monitor and care for a section of shoreline throughout the season.	COMMITTEE SERVICE	Serve on a committee and share your skills in areas like communications, education, governance, events, and more.
COURTESY BOAT INSPECTOR	Prevent invasive aquatic plants from entering our lakes and protect water quality.	BOARD OF DIRECTORS	Help guide BLA's vision and priorities and be a voice for the health of our lakes.
CLEANUPS & SPECIAL PROJECTS	Help with lake cleanups and other projects that keep our lakes clean and beautiful.	NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTOR	Write articles, take photos, and help share the stories that connect and inspire our community.

Belgrade Lakes Association

Board of Directors

2025-2026

Richard LaBelle
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Sharon Jeffe
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Steve Smith
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Blaine Horrocks
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George Atkinson*

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Christine Emmons

Chris Raleigh

Liz Fontaine

John Schlosser

Stephanie Gardner

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*resigned

Partnerships That Advance Our Mission



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2026 BLA Raffle Sponsors

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Your Lakes.
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Scan to learn more about the BLA
or make a donation to protect
Great Pond and Long Pond
for future generations.



PO Box 551 | Belgrade Lakes, Maine 04918
(207) 512-5150 | info@blamaine.org



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