

BELGRADE LAKES ASSOCIATION

*To protect and improve the watershed of Great Pond and
Long Pond through Preservation, Education and Action.*

Fall/Winter 2023



FAREWELL TO A TRUE FRIEND OF THE LAKES

The BLA Wishes To Dedicate This Newsletter To William Isaac Witkin

The fellow with a big smile and twinkle in his eye who was always ready for interesting conversation with his many friends was Bill Witkin. He, with his wife, Joan, owned a camp on the south end of Hoyt Island and was considered by many of us to be Great Pond's finest ambassador from the Greatest Generation. This generous and warm-hearted man worked diligently for over 40 years to preserve what makes the Belgrade Lakes region unique. The Belgrade Lakes Association wishes to honor and applaud him at this time.

William I. Witkin was born in Manhattan and grew up on its upper West Side. Although his family was comfortably well-off, like others of his generation Bill was shaped by the Great Depression. His father, Isaac, a commodities trader, chocolate manufacturer, merchant, and industry leader, founded the New York Cocoa Exchange in 1925 and his own company, the General Cocoa Company, 2 years later. As the son of immigrants and a self-made man, Isaac was dedicated to helping others less fortunate than he and passed his commitment to philanthropy on to his sons because, "It was the right thing to do."



Thank you for your service, Bill.

Bill graduated from Exeter Academy in New Hampshire and then attended the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill. Midway through his junior year, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, so he completed his undergraduate work in 3 years and joined the United States Air Force (it was the right thing to do). He trained as a pilot and flew B-24 bombers out of a base in Italy on missions to destroy supply centers and munitions factories in Germany. Returning safely from the war, he earned his MBA from Harvard and then went into business. He later joined the General Cocoa Company where he served as an executive until his retirement. Throughout his life, from high school on, he made a practice of giving back; a dedicated philanthropist, he was a serious fundraiser for educational institutions, youth betterment programs, and environmental conservation.

Bill and Joan's path to Belgrade Lakes is familiar to many snowbirds; it began years ago with summer camp. As a boy, Bill spent summers on Lake Androscoggin at the camp of the same name in Wayne. Highly rated since its 1907 founding, Camp Androscoggin still welcomes 275 boys each summer to a robust program of trips, sports, art, crafts, music, and drama. When Bill's mother and aunt visited him at camp each summer, they vacationed nearby. They quickly located Jamaica Point cottages on Great Pond and then settled on visiting The Woodlands, Betty Grant's family camps, each year. Decades later, when Bill wanted to revisit his old haunts, he and Joan trekked north to Maine in the summer of 1980 and stayed with Betty. On a ride around the lake, she took them by a historic camp nestled behind its sandy crescent beach at Hoyt's south end. "It happens to be for sale," Betty said. "Do you want to see it?" Curious, they pulled up to the dock. After visiting the lodge, the bunk house and hiking the uphill acreage beyond, Joan was smitten. By the time the pair arrived back home in Chappaqua, they had decided to consult Edward, Peter, and Jane (their three children) for purchase approval.

Since then, the extraordinary warmth and friendship and plain good fun brought to the lake by this pair was squarely matched by their commitment to the welfare of its woods and waters. For many years, Bill served on the board of the Belgrade Lakes Association and was always an active volunteer, generous donor, and outspoken supporter of stewardship. Uniquely, he attended every board meeting throughout each winter by commuting monthly from Chappaqua, NY! As active supporters of the Belgrade region, the Witkins in typical fashion donated 50 acres to the 7 Lakes Alliance's land trust to be Forever Wild because they considered it the right thing to do.

William Isaac Witkin died peacefully in his 101st year at the Westchester Medical Center on November 13, 2023. Bill was a loyal BLA Board member for many years where he contributed his wisdom and kindness as needed. He is survived by his wife, Joan, their three children, three grandchildren, and their offspring.

Bill's human spirit, love of life, friendship, and commitment to the environment will be forever missed.



BOARD MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

John Schlosser



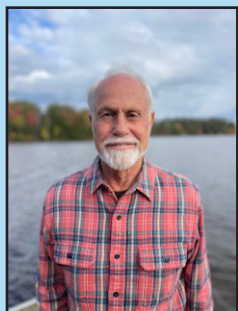
John and his wife, Wendy, began their love of the Belgrade Lakes Region on their honeymoon, returned later to the area with children, and finally bought a camp on Long Pond in 1999. They made Maine their year-round home in 2005 and, in 2021, returned to camp life on Great Pond.

John began a long career in finance with The Hertz Corp which prepared him for a number of positions such as Finance Director and CFO. The last 10 years were spent in that capacity while working for a series of non-profits here in Maine.

John has a long history of being involved on a local level and was a member of the Rome Planning Board for six years and wore many hats on the board of the Peninsula Drive Association for more than 10 years (on Long Pond) before moving to Great Pond in 2021.

Since 1999, the Schlosser family has avidly supported the BLA and recently the 7 Lakes Alliance (formerly the BRCA), and all three of their children have worked as courtesy boat inspectors in their teenage years.

Trent Shute



Trent and his wife, Sandy, bought their home on the north end of Great Pond nearly 5 years ago. He, his wife, his children, their spouses, and all his grandchildren love Great Pond and the Belgrade Lakes area.

Trent served professionally as CFO on the Board of private companies and not-for-profit organizations. In that capacity he managed both external relationships with legal firms, risk management officers, landlords, lenders, and private equity sponsors, and internal relationships as trusted business partner with the CEO and colleagues on the Executive Team. He attended the Institute for Trustees annual training on how to become a more effective board member.

He is on the Town of Rome's Budget Committee, the Cost Sharing Committee for the School District, and the Rome Recreation Committee. Trent is very eager to help us Protect and Preserve our lakes.

* The cover photo is courtesy of BLA Board member, Louise Hogan.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Bert Languet, BLA President

Welcome to our winter newsletter. This is a chance for you to see what has happened over the past open water season and learn what we have planned for our 2024 season. While many think of winter as a time of quietness on the lake, we are busy preparing for next year. When the weather allows – many things can be done all through the year even when there is a shroud of white on the ground. Winter is also a time many of us get out and enjoy our lakes in a different way: skiing, snowshoeing, ice fishing, and more. I get busy working on the Maine Pond Hockey Classic which is held in February. Spring is just around the corner!



Bert Languet

In this newsletter we will discuss LD092, invasive aquatics, and our new Stop Invasive Aquatics logo piloted by Richard LaBelle. We are concerned not only with the current problems we face with invasive milfoil, but also with the threat we face from Eurasian Milfoil (Lake Cobbossee) and Curly Leaf Pond Weed (East Pond Serpentine) which was caught coming into Great Pond this summer by one of our CBI inspectors before it could enter Great Pond. There are other invasive species to watch for as well – fleas, Zebra Mussels, and more. Scary stuff!

The good news is that we have increased our funding of CBI inspections for Great and Long Ponds with the help of your donations and by spending less on Milfoil removal for the second year in a row in Great Meadow Stream. The milfoil is still there and is likely to come back, but we have been able to catch our breath. For 2024, we are likely to expand funding to push the CBI inspection timeline to earlier and later in the seasons. Sharon Mann from 7 Lakes Alliance will give us some updates.

We had a wet summer, to say the least. Our help in funding an additional truck for 7 Lakes Alliance allowed the Youth Conservation Corps teams to work more sites; Section 319 grants, ARPA funds, and town funding from Rome and Belgrade also allowed us to increase our erosion control efforts. As can be seen from lakes near us – the wet summer fueled some late summer algae blooms. Stuart Cole, manager of the erosion control program, will update us on the progress made, and Dr. Danielle Wain will update us on the water quality. We will continue to seek increases to our funding for the erosion control program and will develop a number of projects that can be done in cooperation with the 7 Lakes Alliance.

Loons – we got 'em. Dick Greenan writes about loons in winter and discusses our successful summer internship with Colby students who studied the nesting pairs and chicks. We consider loons to be important indicators of the quality of our lakes, and we seek to know more about them and to preserve their numbers. We are discussing the idea of a loon cam and an auction to raise interest and funds to set it up.

Events – this summer we had several wonderful events sponsored by local companies that benefitted the BLA: our annual Meeting, Hamlin's Demo Days, and the Earnest Thompson book signing. The raffle, our largest fundraiser, was our biggest yet – thanks to Hamlin Marine and our other donors. Events are ways for us to interact and communicate about the lakes – Covid taught us the importance of in person meetings. We look forward to having many more next year – some great ideas came out of our annual meeting when you were able to speak with board members one-on-one. If you would like to host an event, or have an idea for an event, please reach out to me or our membership chair, Carol Johnson. Community is important to all of us.

A question we ask is how do we expand our membership? Many people who enjoy the lake do not own property. They either rent a slip or put their boats in daily. How do we reach them and get them to become members? We have created a youth membership this summer to reach out to the next generation. However, we plan to do more.

Our towns and local businesses benefit from the economic drivers of the lakes, but increasing their numbers and diversity of members will help us support our mission.

Teamwork is vital. The Belgrade Lakes Association is charged with preserving and protecting Long and Great Ponds. We have been doing this for 115 years since 1908. We often partner with the 7 Lakes Alliance and communicate with the other lake associations in our chain of lakes to make sure we all work together. I am optimistic that we will continue to achieve our goals of keeping the lakes clean and healthy, especially with your help as members. Thank you for being a part of our team!

Best Regards,



MAINE LEGISLATURE UPDATE

By Richard LaBelle, BLA Vice President

Maine Legislature Takes Steps to Strengthen Boat Landing Requirements

The 131st Maine Legislature passed the lake-friendly LD 92, An Act to Minimize the Propagation of Invasive Aquatic Plants. The bill requires any person removing a vessel from an inland waterbody to drain the vessel, remove or open drain plugs, bailers, valves, and other devices to drain the water before the vessel is transported. Put in plain English: when you pull your boat from the lake, you are now required to pull the drain plug before you leave the area. You must empty live wells, ballasts, tanks, bilges, etc.



Richard LaBelle

The Belgrade Lakes Association has long stood behind the courtesy boat inspection programs and, in the last several years, has expanded funding for the program to continue through mid-October each year. We have always encouraged boat owners to inspect their boats before and after being in the lake, even if a courtesy boat inspector isn't present. The time taken to check your boat, motor, tackle, anchor, etc., is extremely small when you consider that removing one invasive plant will save millions of dollars in actual expense while preserving the tremendous ecological value of our lakes.

We applaud the Maine Legislature for their work in supporting the BLA and others' efforts to maintain clean and healthy lakes for all to enjoy.

GIFTING

By Bert Languet, BLA President

Now may be a good time to consider gifting which can include individual equities, equity mutual funds, real estate, or cash. Funding your favorite charities using appreciated assets can help reduce your tax burden. Other planning tools to explore are a QCD or setting up a Donor Advised Fund.

Stock, Real Estate, or other Appreciated Assets as gifts:

Using appreciated stock, real estate, or other assets that have risen in value to fund charitable bequests can avoid paying capital gains taxes and give you a tax deduction.

QCD's (Qualified Charitable Distributions):

Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCD's). A qualified charitable distribution allows individuals 70 ½ or older to donate up to \$100,000 to one or more charities directly from a taxable IRA instead of taking their required minimum distributions. Starting in 2023, anyone 70 ½ or older may elect as part of their QCD limit (current limit \$100,000) a one-time gift up to \$50,000 to a charitable remainder unitrust, charitable remainder trust, or charitable gift annuity.

Donor-Advised Fund (DAF):

A donor advised fund is a charitable giving vehicle administered by a public charity to manage donations on behalf of the donors. An advantage is that the assets can be managed professionally for a fraction of the cost of setting up your own private foundation. Donations to a DAF qualify for an immediate tax deduction, grow tax-deferred, and allow for grants over time. In 2023, the standard deduction is \$13,850 for single filers and \$27,700 for joint filers. If over 65, there is an additional \$1850 added to the standard deduction for joint filers, single filers, or heads of household. Because of the increase in standard deductions, many taxpayers' itemized deductions, including gifts to charities, do not exceed the standard deduction. What do you do if you want to claim a deduction for a gift to charity? The answer can be making a larger gift to a Donor Advised Fund that exceeds the standard deduction and then use the funds from the donor-advised funds to make future gifts.

If you would like to make a gift to the BLA, please contact the BLA Treasurer, Blaine Horrocks, by phone at 207-844-4490 or by email at bnhorrocks@gmail.com. Please consult your advisors and tax professionals before making any contributions. Securities and Advisory Services offered through LPL Financial, a Registered Investment Advisor. Member FINRA/SIPC



SHIFTING COURSE FOR LONG-TERM SUCCESS

By Richard LaBelle, BLA Vice President

For well over a decade, the BLA and our supporters have been dedicated to the STOP Milfoil program which is our arsenal in the battle to keep milfoil out of our lakes. Milfoil remains a primary threat, but we can't become complacent or be blind to the threat of other invasive aquatic plants being introduced into our treasured lakes. The cause of introduction may be up for debate, but one thing remains unquestionable: our lakes remain at risk. Invasive aquatic plants have already intruded on other lakes in our watershed.

Variable milfoil is the species of plant that has been found in Great Pond. In North Pond, teams have found curly-leaf pondweed while Eurasian milfoil has grabbed a strong foothold in Cobbossee Lake. These locations are just a stone's throw away from the Belgrades, and we must remain vigilant in our defense. Our work to be proactive against such threats is the cause for a shift in our organization's milfoil program: the BLA's STOP Milfoil program is now STOP Invasive Aquatic Plants. Our milfoil campaign has been successful, but we must broaden our scope to monitor other invasive species.

So, what is our path forward? We will remain steadfast in our battle against milfoil, but this pivot will allow us to battle against other species of invasive plants should such a day come to Great Pond or Long Pond. Our position will be more robust; our defenses will be greater. Existing funds that have been designated for milfoil remediation will continue to remain in that conditional account and be designated to milfoil only. Moving forward, requests to our generous donors will be under the larger umbrella of invasive aquatic plants. These new funds will be kept in a separate account reserved only to battle invasive aquatic plants. This more holistic approach is best for our lakes in the long-term.

Lynn Matson built a remarkably successful platform to battle invasive milfoil, and we will continue to build on that as we move forward. Only through the generosity of people, like you, have we been able to chart the success we have. We must all remain vigilant; our lakes still need your support, both as volunteers and donors. While we hope the day will never come that another invasive will arrive in our lake, we must be realistic about the imminent threat that invasive aquatic plants pose, and we need to do what we can to armor Long Pond and Great Pond.



2023 BLA FALL LOON SURVEY UPDATE

By Dick Greenan, BLA Board Member, Loon Preservation Project Chair

The Belgrade Lakes Association just completed the fifth year of its Loon Preservation Project. If you recall, the purpose of the project is to develop a responsible comprehensive plan in order to support our loon population in the very best sustainable manner. We are taking our loss in chick longevity very seriously and are trying to get ahead of it. This past season was no exception.



Loon in Morning Sun

Following this past breeding season, we started off with 5 chicks from Great Pond and 8 chicks from Long Pond. Unfortunately, out of Great Pond's 5 chicks, we suspect that only one made it to the Fly-Off. The other four fell victims to mother nature. On Long Pond, out of the original 8, just 4 of its chicks made it almost all the way to the Fly-Off; but only 2, as best we can determine, actually made it to the Fly-Off.



Tracy Cove parents diligently checking for threats to protect their chicks.

Our best guess, due to the difficulty in distinguishing the 10-11 lb. chick/juvenile (right photo) from its molting 11-13 lb. parent (left photo), is that we may have had just 3 chicks this year that made it to the Fall Fly-off, one from Great Pond and two from Long Pond. It is a guess, and it could be just one. At this time of year, they all appear to be playing hide and seek! The chicks have a strong interest in exploration, and their parents have the desire to rid themselves of these obnoxious teenagers, but the adult loons have the edge!



Oak Island, Great Pond Molting Adult



Foster Point, Great Pond Chick/Juvenile

Overall breeding productivity has been a major concern throughout the northeast. Out of a possible twenty-five loon territories between Great and Long Ponds, we had only ten territories that produced one or more chicks. We did lose a few eggs due to predation and collected another six eggs this year that were just plain abandoned. Bad parenting? You be the judge! As we collected seven eggs last year and eight the year before, it appears that this is a trend in the right direction which is a very premature assumption.

Thanks to the support of our Membership, we were able to band a record 17 loons this summer which will continue to pay dividends for years to come. Being able to confirm a returning pair is always a step in the right direction. Project leader, Lee Attix, of Loon Conservation Associates, will have the Five-Year Summary and recommendations for us very shortly. In the meantime, enjoy your winter, and see you next spring!



Although we don't actually speak "Loon," we suspect this loon is saying, "Do Not Disturb."

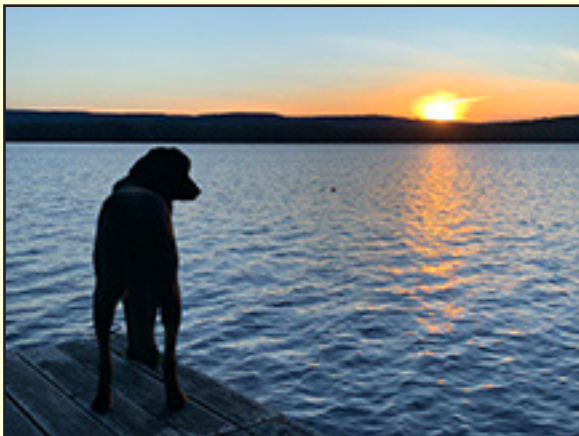
A VIEW FROM AWAY

By Anthony Wilson, BLA Member, Guest Columnist

“From away.” Some old fogies occasionally trot out that pithy putdown as a reminder that we’re not part of the exclusive club of native Mainers. (To be fair, that attitude is non-existent in the BLA ... perhaps because so many of us are from-aways.) But here’s the advantage of being from away: When you’re not from here, you never take for granted Maine’s many marvels. That’s because the Pine Tree State – and the Belgrades – seems so much more than the places that we are now away from.

Take winter. (Here, Groucho Marx might interject, “Please!”) Christina and I are pro-snow. While many grumble, we thrill at the sight of the first flakes fluttering earthward, eager for the blindingly white blanket it leaves behind. The land just looks cleaner after a fresh snowfall. Suddenly, our playground – our home – turns ripe for cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and winter hiking.

Every season exhibits its charms. Spring’s rebirth fosters a heightened sense of anticipation as the trees begin to bud and bloom. Summertime’s brilliant greens serve as a lush backdrop to shimmering sunsets over glassy waters. Autumn’s color explosion simply wows.



We lived a good portion of our life on the edge of the Chihuahuan Desert. Our eyes are never blind to the fact that all around us here in the Belgrades are clear, cool waters, rolling hills teeming with flora and fauna, dark night skies in which the Milky Way pops, summer nights alive with the croaking of peepers, and winter mornings that invigorate with the first deep draw of pristine air.

When we moved here, a friend who grew up in Machias said to me, “Anthony, always remember: You’re going to be living in a place where other people work 50 weeks out of the year so they can spend two weeks there.” I liked that. Live here long enough, and perhaps you run the risk of becoming inured to the exquisiteness of Vacationland ... and of the Belgrades. But not us. Never. Ours is a view “from away.”

YOUTH CONSERVATION CORPS UPDATE

By Stuart Cole, 7 Lakes Alliance – Erosion Control Program Director

The effects of the near record rainfall over the summer made it abundantly clear that we still have a long way to go in preventing erosion on our shorefront property and camp roads. Fortunately, with increased staff, a new truck, and a new dumping trailer, the YCC conducted one of its most productive seasons, even with all the rainy days. Having two trucks allowed three crews to work on projects throughout the watershed every day, and the dumping trailer provided materials as needed in a timely fashion. With increased capacity and efficiency, the YCC was able to install a total of 124 BMPs throughout the watershed this year.



New Truck and Trailer

With the increasing frequency of extreme precipitation events, installing BMPs that infiltrate runoff into the ground, instead of letting it run across the ground's surface picking up dirt containing harmful phosphorus, is more important than ever. Dry wells, rain gardens, dripline infiltration trenches, and French drains are popular examples of run-off infiltrating BMPs that the YCC installs.



Erosion Control Mulch



Infiltration Steps



Riprap with Buffer Plants

If you think your property might benefit from the YCC installing one of these BMPs, or if you're not sure and you'd like to have an erosion control site evaluation, contact 7 Lakes Alliances erosion control program by emailing stuart.cole@7lakesalliance.org or calling 207-495-6039.

WE FIXED THE DAM THING!

By Dick Greenan, BLA Board Member, Belgrade Area Dams Committee Chair

By the time you read this column, the dam in Belgrade Lakes Village, which holds back the 8,533 acres of Great Pond, will have undergone an extensive \$205,000 concrete remediation project. Apparently concrete does have a relatively short lifespan when particularly exposed to road salt, ice, and constant water pressure.

That portion of the dam that parallels the Rt. 27 bridge had really experienced the majority of the deterioration. Our 8' brass staff gauge actually fell off of the north dam abutment due to the concrete crumbling behind it. Our dam's operators were unaware of the extent of the concrete breakdown until we contracted with Knowles Industrial Services, a top engineering firm. They demonstrated the difference in concrete deterioration by striking various areas of the concrete with a hammer. Striking structurally solid concrete produces a metallic sound, whereas, broken down concrete sounds more like hitting a wet log.



Note the deterioration of the north abutment concrete.

One of the greatest challenges we had was how to construct a cofferdam to hold back Great Pond without draining it! For that, we once again enlisted the services of Joe Kacer and his Commercial Divers, Inc. who designed a cofferdam constructed of fifty 2,500 lb. bags of sand that were placed by a crane and divers into a pyramid shape. All this resulted in a relatively dry environment for the contractors work, especially for the concrete pour and setup.



The cofferdam was constructed of fifty 2,500-lb. sand bags.

We had understood that the imbedded rebar in the old concrete had rusted and, as a result, moisture had penetrated into and broken down the adjacent concrete into basically sand. After jack-hammering the offending concrete, we were hard pressed to even find rebar; the little rebar we found was neither tied nor welded together as is standard practice today, but apparently not fifty years or so ago.



The nylon dome allowed a tented and dry environment in which to work.

Two of our local and esteemed contractors pooled their resources and jackhammered away the old broken-down concrete. They added tied, welded and sealed rebar, and put new plating to each of the 9'x10' radial steel gates, added new seals and gaskets, applied new paint and a new sealant to all of the concrete, old and new. Hopefully, this specialized mix of 5,000 psi. concrete will provide more resistance to our harsh winters and the new slurry of road salt used by Maine DOT.



Note the new north abutment welded rebar awaiting the concrete truck.

Time will tell how long this fix will last, but we hope for at least forty to fifty years. Unfortunately, there are no records of when the majority of the existing concrete was poured, but we do know that it was extensively patched back in 1995 which, at most of the sites, merely trapped the moisture that resulted in further deterioration. A sincere Thank You to the officers and residents of the Towns of Belgrade, Rome, Oakland, Mt. Vernon and Sidney who comprise the Dams Committee Interlocal Agreement for their undaunted support in funding this all-important effort.



These repairs look dam good!

WATER QUALITY UPDATE

By Dr. Danielle Wain, 7 Lakes Alliance – Lake Science Director



Danielle Wain

The main story of Summer 2023 was Rain! Rain! Rain! Almost 24" of rain was recorded at the Augusta airport between May and August. In 2022, that total was only 9". Both the Great Pond and Long Pond Watershed Based Management Plan identified external load as the primary source of phosphorus entering the lakes. External load typically comes

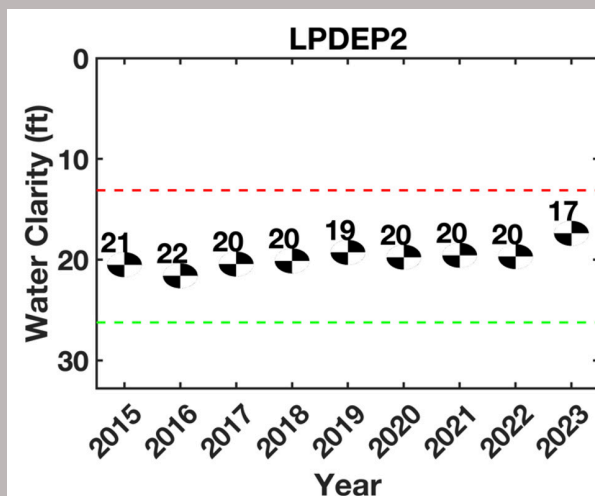
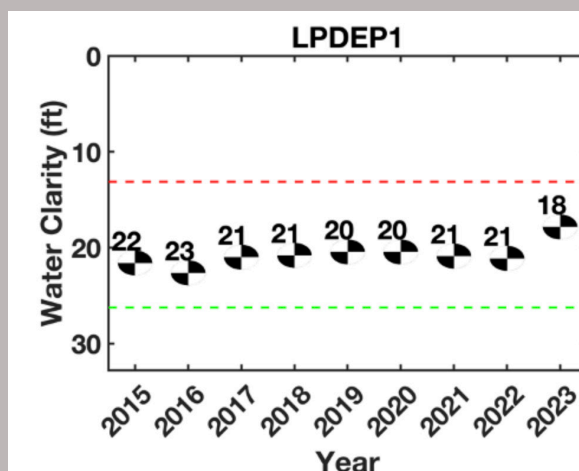
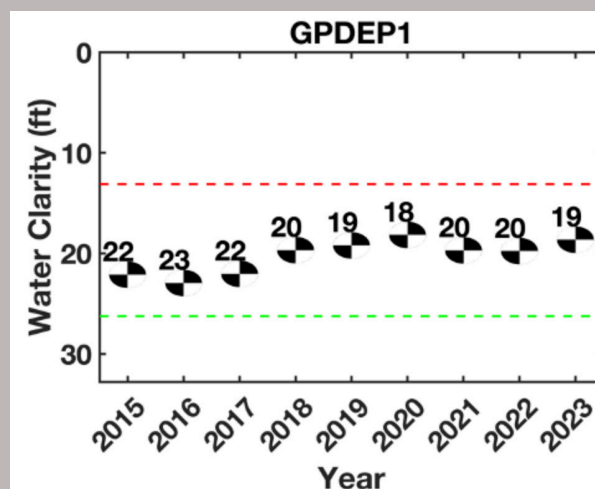
from runoff and soil erosion along the shoreline and in the watershed. The more rain we get, the more runoff we get, and our lakes become less clear.

Average water clarity (as measured by Secchi Disk Transparency) for 2023 declined on both lakes. On Great Pond, it declined to 19 ft, not the worst we have seen since the intensive monitoring of the 7 Lakes-Colby Water Quality Initiative began in 2015 (Figure 1), but it is inching in the wrong direction. Long Pond had a much more dramatic shift in water clarity, with a decline of 3 ft in both the north and south basin, the worst clarity on both lakes since 2015.

According to the recent report from the state[1], we are experiencing more rain with rain events greater than 2" increasing in frequency. These big rain events are even more likely to wash sediment and phosphorus into the lakes because of the rushing water they bring. This will be a growing challenge for our watershed into the future. The only way to protect our lakes is to protect our watershed through land conservation, smart future development, and protection of our shorelines through programs like LakeSmart and Youth Conservation Corps. All residents around the lake and the watershed can do their part to protect the lakes by helping us build a more resilient watershed.

Figure 1: Yearly average Secchi disk transparency for 2015-2023. Above the red dashed line is poor water quality conditions; below the green dashed line indicates good water quality. GPDEP1 is Great Pond near the south side of Hoyt's Island, LPDEP1 is the north basin of Long Pond, and LPDEP2 is the south basin of Long Pond.

[1] MCC STS. 2020. Scientific Assessment of Climate Change and Its Effects in Maine. A Report by the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee (STS) of the Maine Climate Council (MCC). Augusta, Maine. 370 pp.



2023 BLA RAFFLE

Another Record Success for our Lakes! Dedication, Donation, Participation

By Andy Cook, BLA Board Member, BLA Raffle Chair



New tents shaded volunteers and patrons.



Andy Cook (left) and David Welch displaying one of the raffle prizes.

Through dedication, donation and participation by us all, we had an excellent raffle for our lakes. We achieved a record of \$64,000 in raffle revenue. It was the dedication of the BLA board members and volunteers who helped out at the tables, the valuable donations from our excellent suppliers, and the participation by many that made it a success.

There were some wonderful moments. One of the best was enjoying the shade of our new raffle table tents. Better yet, Hamlin's Marine outdid themselves with a superb 18' Godfrey Pontoon boat-motor and trailer donation. During Hamlin's days of fun raffle boating events, they sold a boat, on the spot, to one of us! At the suggestion of the BLA, the first prize winner of the pontoon boat generously donated it to the 7 Lakes Alliance. It will be used as a lake research platform, a milfoil diver base, and a water quality education resource.

We owe huge thanks to those who generously donated over \$60,000 of prizes. They all came through for us! Those contributors include Hamlin's Marine, Hammond Lumber, Bert and Sara Languet, Lynch Landscaping, Dick Greenan, Day's Store, Gail and Frank Rizzo, the Village Inn, Skowhegan Savings Bank, David Welch, The Farmers Market team, and Lakepoint Realty.

Many deserve special recognition for their efforts on behalf of the raffle. Some of those include Directors Bert Languet, George Atkinson, Dick Greenan, Polly Beatie, Blaine Horrocks, and Carol Johnson. Members Lynn Matson and Marcel Schnee did important work to help us along the path to success. Like all great successes, we owe this BLA record to hard work by a lot of people and the generosity and participation by many more. It's paying off for the lakes. Nicely done, and thank you all.

OUR LOONS IN WINTER

By Brynne Robbins, 2023 BLA/Colby College Loon Project Intern

As fall approaches, many seasonal residents button up their camps and begin their migration to warmer climates. The loons are no exception. Loons spend summers on lakes such as these and winters on the open ocean. This exodus begins as early as mid-August for some birds and stretches to November for others. Adults with chicks, unsurprisingly, tend to stay later. The cutoff date, and when lingering birds find themselves in trouble, is when ice first skims over the water because loons need a considerable amount of open water to act as a runway in order to take flight. They're strong fliers once airborne; some loons migrate thousands of miles to their wintering grounds, resting on lakes along their path, even the New York Central Park Reservoir.

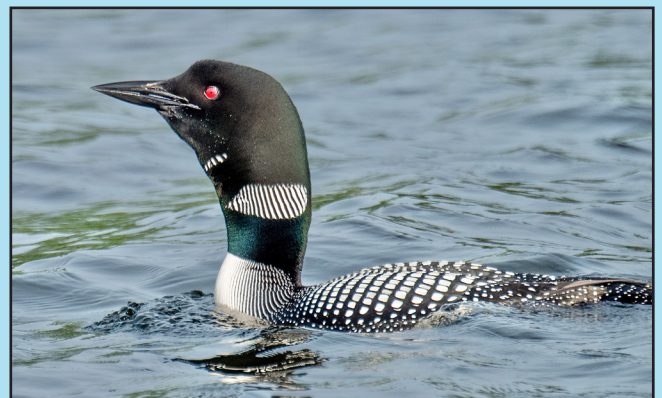


Brynne Robbins



Note the bands and the two primary flight feathers that were clipped for analysis during the banding procedure. (The flight feathers will all be replaced in the early spring!)

Loons, like many animals, use climate cues to determine the correct time to migrate. This poses an issue as warmer and more variable temperatures become the norm. For instance, a warm fall followed by a cold snap could leave loons trapped in the ice. Or, abnormally cold temperatures earlier on could induce a premature migration. In fact, on a survey yesterday, we encountered a banded adult whose unique color combination was different from any in our banding records. Could this visitor be a migrating bird? We aren't sure. Varying temperatures is just one of the many possible dangers that a changing climate poses to loons, and it will be important to monitor.



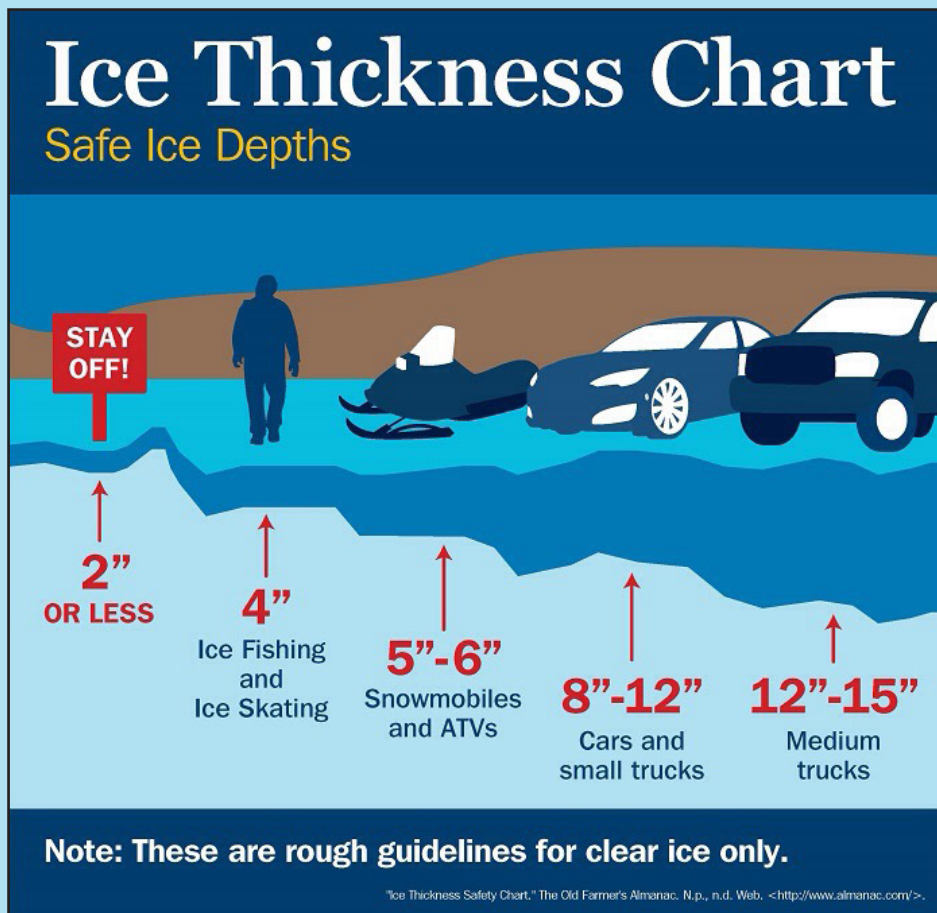
This loon is in the middle of a call; note the distended throat!

The birds that face the largest hurdles are the chicks. If they do manage to survive the summer, they must migrate, often alone, to the coast. While many chicks reach a comfortably large size with time to spare, the last chicks hatching at the end of July and even in the first week of August will be considerably smaller. If a loon chick isn't mature enough to fly by the time the lakes freeze, it won't survive.



This chick is in winter plumage along with its parent. Note that the parent is beginning to exhibit early molting below the beak.

When loons finally reach the ocean, they congregate in large groups called rafts and spend the winter there in their mottled brown winter plumage. Chicks will remain on the ocean for the first 4-5 years of their lives until they reach breeding age. Then, they'll migrate back to the general area of the lake where they hatched. If you are bound for the coast this winter – Atlantic or Pacific – keep your eyes peeled for loons in their winter plumage.



INVASIVE AQUATICS PROGRAM UPDATES

By Sharon Mann, 7 Lakes Alliance – Invasive Aquatics Director

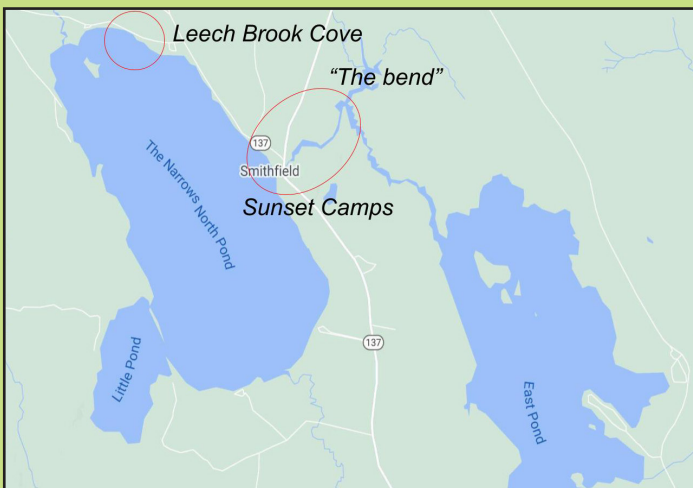
2023 Season by the Numbers

- 2 new areas with invasive milfoil in Great Pond
- 1 milfoil plant found in Great Meadow Stream
- 200 acres surveyed for invasives in North Bay
- 18 Adopt-A-Shoreline workshops hosted
- 13 invasive plants removed from boats by CBIs
- 78% less Curly leaf pondweed in the Serpentine
- 12,034 Boat Inspections by 7 Lakes' CBIs
 - North Pond - 887
 - East Pond - 786
 - Salmon Lake - 1,134
 - Long Pond - 2,678
 - Great Pond - 3,424

Curly Leaf Pondweed

Thanks to the early identification of curly leaf pondweed (CLP) in the Serpentine, 7 Lakes and partners have managed to significantly reduce the size of the infestation. The dive crew removed 78% less CLP in the stream in 2023 than in 2022.

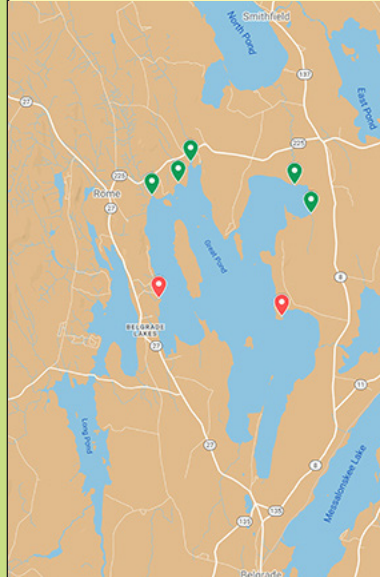
Unfortunately, many CLP fragments escaped through the Serpentine and were blown into Leech Brook Cove in North Pond. 7 Lakes has been diligently removing all floating CLP from North Pond since making the discovery. Due to the abundance of fragments found, we expect to find rooted CLP in North Pond next spring. The abnormal precipitation this summer was likely the cause of this spread.



"The Serpentine" is in the red oval above, between North Pond and East Pond.

Variable-Leaf Milfoil

All invasive milfoil plants found in 2023 have been removed.



Existing milfoil infestations since 2012

- North Bay
- Great Meadow Stream
- Robbins Mill Stream
- Swann's Brook
- Rome Trout Brook

New areas where 1-2 VWM plants were found in 2023

- Richard's Point Cove (East)
- Dry Point Cove (West)

Herbicide Treatment

Great Meadow Stream (GMS) was treated with a low-risk herbicide, ProcellaCOR, in 2022 in an effort to greatly reduce the footprint of invasive variable-leaf milfoil in Great Pond.

Since the application took place, we have only found one milfoil plant in the mouth of GMS! Based on similar applications in the Northeast, we fully expect some invasive milfoil regrowth in 2024; however, the growth will be significantly less than in previous years.

Maine-DEP may permit the application of ProcellaCOR in GMS, Rome Trout Brook, and Robbins Mill Stream in 2024, depending on the regrowth situation in Great Meadow Stream.



Milfoil removed from a cove off Dry Pond Road

Calling all totally RAD divers!

Invasive species get around. This year alone a new invasive species to the state of Maine, swollen bladderwort, was confirmed in three new waterbodies; one of those waterbodies is in Fairfield! Just south of us, Eurasian water milfoil continues to spread to new areas of Cobbossee Lake. All of these invasive species are just as likely to come to our lakes! As we know, not all boats are launched at public access sites where and when CBI's are stationed.



Lead Diver, Briahna Loring, dons a crown of hornwort while removing curly-leaf pondweed from the Serpentine.

This sad reality means that invasives will continue to spread, and it is up to us to find new infestations as early as possible and remove the threat before it starts degrading lake health. Lake associations across the state are beginning to organize volunteer-powered emergency response teams who are trained in invasive plant identification and removal in anticipation of an invasive being introduced.

A great example of this comes from Mousam Lake Region Association who assembled a team of volunteer divers to remove invasive Chinese mystery snails. What started as a fun activity while group diving, turned into an incredibly important emergency response effort to remove a noxious species when the group unexpectedly found invasive swollen bladderwort in Mousam Lake!

Are you a certified diver looking to put your skills to good use? Have you always wanted to dive, but the furthest you have gone is snorkeling? Do you have a passion for protecting the lake you love? If you said "yes" to any of the above, we want to hear from you! Starting in June, 2024, 7 Lakes Alliance will be hosting group dives in each of the 7 Lakes in an effort to set up a RAD (rapid action diver) team!

Each volunteer will be trained in aquatic plant identification and proper removal techniques. Removal of any aquatic vegetation requires a permit from Maine-DEP. It is illegal to remove vegetation without a permit. After attending a 7 Lakes RAD training, you will be covered under 7 Lakes' permit as long as you follow all the guidelines (which will be discussed in the training). To sign up for the totally RAD team, fill out this form! <https://tinyurl.com/3wfmxa8w>



Denise Blanchette of Maine-DEP takes a plunge during an annual site visit to the Belgrade Lakes.

Note: if you are interested in any Invasive Aquatic volunteer opportunities, please email sharon.mann@7lakesalliance.org

INVASIVE FISH THAT TOOK OVER LAKES NOW THREATENS THE REST OF MAINE

By Pete Warner, Bangor Daily News

Monday, May 1st, 2023

(This article is reprinted with permission from the Bangor Daily News.)



Registered Maine Guide Ryan Brod caught this central Maine pike on a fly. (Courtesy of Ryan Brod via BDN)

Long Pond was once a salmon angler's dream

During the 1970s the water, located in Belgrade and Mount Vernon, held big fish. The state managed Long Pond with focus on its salmon fishery and enacted restrictions to bolster its population. "It was very common to get a 5-pound salmon out of Long," said Jason Seiders, a fisheries biologist for the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. "If you lived in the Augusta area, you didn't have to go all the way to Rangeley to go catch a nice salmon." But the number of salmon has plummeted in the Belgrade Lakes over the past 40 years. And the trend is spreading across Maine.

The illegal introduction of invasive species, especially northern pike, has transformed Long Pond. Anglers can catch huge pike there now, but the salmon are long gone. Successful salmon programs at Great Pond and Messalonskee also were abandoned after the pike took hold. They wiped out the smelts, the baitfish that are salmon's main food source, speeding the demise of the salmon.

Pike can eliminate other fish species and take over lakes and ponds. And while many anglers welcome more opportunities to catch the large fish, the state fears that further illegal stocking of pike, black bass, black crappie, and other invasive species poses a statewide threat to native coldwater fisheries that have made Maine a popular destination for anglers from around the world. There's little the state can do to prevent it.

A disturbing trend begins

Pike were first confirmed in the Belgrades in 1981, starting with Great Pond, North Pond and Little Pond. The waters also include Little Pond, Messalonskee Lake, McGrath Pond, East Pond, Salmon Lake and Ingham Pond. Long Pond is among the worst-case scenarios for the 38 Maine lakes and ponds in nine counties where pike have been illegally dumped. There the pike devoured the smelts and salmon. The state-stocked brook trout and salmon, the bass introduced about 100 years ago, and the rainbow smelts that served as forage are now minor players — if they can still be found at all.

“The northern pike is an apex predator. It’s at the top of the food chain,” DIF&W Director of Fisheries and Hatcheries Francis Brautigam said. The voracious pike can completely take over a pond. “I always tell people: Once they’re in, they’re in. There’s not a lot that we can do in terms of management,” Seiders said. Pike not only consume most fish species, but also eat amphibians, juvenile waterfowl, and almost anything else they can grab. They typically grow to be from 17 to 25 inches on average, but can reach 50 inches and 30 pounds. They have a mouthful of teeth and hunt by hiding behind vegetation and waiting to attack their prey. “They have a presence pretty much unlike many of the other species that may be native to some of these systems,” Brautigam said. “It’s not to say that those other species disappear. It just means that more of the production is going to be directed toward northern pike.”

After confirming the presence of pike in the Belgrades, the state briefly attempted to protect them in a few waters. The practice was quickly abandoned, citing a conflict with departmental goals. “We can’t actively manage invasive species that we’re concerned about seeing further spread on,” Brautigam said. DIF&W focuses on protecting native coldwater species such as salmon, brook trout and lake trout. The state also uses hatchery-reared fish like brook trout, brown trout and rainbow trout to provide sport fisheries in lakes and ponds statewide. The dumping of nonnative fish in waters where they didn’t previously exist has increasingly stymied these efforts. Complicating matters, there have been more recent introductions of two other invasive species, freshwater alewives and black crappie. The Belgrades also are dealing with increased phosphorus levels that lead to algae blooms and depleted water oxygen levels which can kill fish and other organisms.

A fisheries puzzle

DIF&W has been caught in a dilemma when it comes to pike. The department’s focus for years has been to protect and improve coldwater fisheries, especially native populations. But it’s also supposed to encourage people to fish and keep it sustainable for the future. The state chooses not to manage pike because of their status as an invasive species and can do nothing to control them. That has forced DIF&W to undertake adaptive management, stocking other species in some of the Belgrades to provide another fish to target besides pike. “We worry that if the department invests in enhancing the quality of those [pike] fisheries, it will just encourage more illegal introductions, almost as if the department is condoning those fisheries, so we don’t actively manage them,” Brautigam said.

However, pike would not be the first invasive species to be managed. Black bass, smallmouth and largemouth, have been in Maine for more than a century. They were introduced, both legally by fisheries managers and illegally by anglers, into numerous Maine waters. Over time, bass have achieved popularity among sport anglers, which led to more illegal introductions. Smallmouth bass and largemouth bass ranked second and third, respectively, in angler popularity, according to a 2016 study conducted by the state. That’s created complications for DIF&W. The state manages bass as part of its efforts in the South Zone, but treats the fish as an invasive species in the North Zone, where they continue to spread through illegal stocking.

(continued on page 22)

Go big or go home

With the Belgrades dominated by fish that can reach more than 20 pounds, anglers now specifically target pike in most of those waters. The state record pike, caught by Lance Bolduc in 1998 at North Pond in Smithfield — where it is believed the first pike in the region were illegally introduced — was 31.2 pounds. “They can grow upwards of 6, 8 inches — up to a foot even — within a given year, which is just unheard of,” Brautigam said.

There are 16 waters in Kennebec County and eight more in Androscoggin County that contain pike. Some anglers believe the state should maximize opportunities for them to catch pike. They contend the fish are already well entrenched and exist mostly in ponds where coldwater species are unsustainable. “They’ve become established largely in fisheries with marginal water quality, and they give fly anglers an opportunity to target 20-pound predators in shallow water each spring and fall. That’s unique,” said angler and Registered Maine Guide Ryan Brod of Portland, who is an Outdoors contributor for the Bangor Daily News. Brod suggested that, with some intervention by the state, anglers and guides might have better opportunities to catch pike. Promoting the Belgrades as a pike paradise could boost local businesses. Scott Davis, a 35-year DIF&W biologist and Registered Maine Guide, said there has been an unmistakable shift among angler attitudes in the Belgrades since pike were thrust into the equation. Anglers who are in their 20s and 30s never saw salmon in the Belgrades or had an opportunity to catch them, he said. “[They] don’t know what it was like. Pike are the best thing since sliced bread, because they get huge,” Davis said. “A lot of people don’t care what the fish is, they just want a big fish.”

A good number of pike anglers believe releasing a fish back into the water will not only make it available for other anglers, but will also allow it to get larger. Practicing catch and release with northern pike may have the opposite effect as there is a point of diminishing returns, biologists said. After being introduced, a new species will thrive and grow faster than anything else in the system for the first seven to 10 years. Then the potential for producing large fish declines. “Then we all say, ‘I remember when,’ 15 or 20 years down the road,” Davis said. A body of water can only support a certain number of fish before growth rates slow. If few pike are permanently removed from lakes and ponds, they can become overcrowded. That leads to an overabundance of small fish and fewer trophy-sized fish.

Dealing with the pike presence

In Long Pond, the pike have taken over for good, but that doesn’t mean the state isn’t trying to work around them. In the Belgrades, DIF&W is also stocking brown trout, rainbow trout or brook trout in selected waters. For example, Long Pond is stocked with rainbow trout, which have shown the ability to survive long enough for anglers to hook up. At Messalonskee Lake, Great Pond and Salmon Lake, the state is experimenting with brown trout. The brown trout programs at Great Pond and Messalonskee have been in place since the ’90s after the salmon were extirpated, Seiders said. The state gave up on larger-scale stocking of brook trout which had flourished in some of the waters. Those efforts provide small numbers of brookies in some areas of high angler use which amounts to a put-and-take fishery. One example is the outlet dam on Messalonskee Lake. Any brook trout distributed more widely across the lake would wind up succumbing to pike predation, Seiders said.

Although the program is still in the early stages, rainbows seem to have been able to coexist, at some level, with pike. “Rainbows don’t need smelts to grow. They do better on smelts, but they don’t have to have them,” Davis said, stressing that the pike have all but eradicated the smelts in the Belgrades. Some of the rainbows survive for several years and reach 18 to 22 inches. For the state, that is at least a short-term victory.

Bracing for an uncertain future

Biologists face an uphill battle dealing with northern pike. In most waters where the fish have been introduced, they have taken over and are becoming the preferred target species. Such is the case at Pushaw Lake near Bangor where pike were first confirmed in 2003. And they're spreading, having been found in the adjacent Stillwater and Penobscot rivers. Officials fear pike will be dumped into more waters, imperiling traditional fisheries, including native brook trout and landlocked salmon habitat.

One legislative bill this session would prevent additional fishways at two dams on the Penobscot and Piscataquis rivers. Pike have made their way out of Pushaw and have moved upstream, posing a threat to coldwater fisheries located in the Millinocket region and Baxter State Park. "It definitely would be trouble for both salmon and brook trout. We're already experiencing issues with the salmon here," said Registered Maine Guide Bryant Davis, operator of Maine Quest Adventures in Millinocket. Davis said that's because another invasive species, smallmouth bass, is distributed through parts of the lower west branch of the Penobscot. Pike might mean dire consequences for coldwater fish. "They're a lot bigger fish, which means they're going to eat more fish and they'll eat bigger fish," Davis said. "It has the potential to devastate both the salmon and the brook trout."

The state's best weapon in preventing the spread of invasive species is to educate people about the damage invasives inflict on fisheries. However, history indicates that anglers are often willing to break the law and make those decisions for themselves, leaving the state and other anglers to deal with the consequences. All it takes is one person dumping a few pike into a body of water to change a fishery forever.

We've invited you to fill out a form:

BLA Hardcopy Communications Opt-Out

The Belgrade Lakes Association prides itself on strong communication with its members, but we are also mindful of the environmental impact of printing and mailing letters, newsletters, etc. Many members still prefer to receive traditional, mailed communications, and we respect that, too.

By **OPTING OUT** of printed communications, you'll still receive all communications electronically via email. This environmentally friendly, cost-saving measure allows us to use more of our donated resources to improve water quality in Great Pond and Long Pond directly.

FILL OUT FORM





**BELGRADE LAKES
ASSOCIATION**

137 Main Street
P.O. Box 551
Belgrade Lakes, ME 04918

PHONE:
207.512.5150

EMAIL:
info@blmaine.org

WEB:
belgradelakesassociation.org

Non Profit
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit #1
Belgrade Lakes ME

BLA Board of Directors

Bert Languet
President

Richard LaBelle
Vice President

Blaine Horrocks
Treasurer

Steve Smith
Secretary

George Atkinson
John Atkinson
Polly Parkhill Beatie
Andy Cook
Pat Donahue
Liz Fontaine
Eva Frank
Stephanie Gardner
Dick Greenan
Louise Hogan
Nathalie Horrocks
Sharon Jeffe
Carol Johnson
John Schlosser
Trent Shute
Sunil Thakor



The community Christmas tree was blown down during a severe microburst in 2021. However, the Village Green has a new tree! Many thanks to Mark Gliniewicz for generously purchasing the new tree and to Matt Gauthier of Native Notions for planting it.

The newsletter staff (Polly Beatie, Liz Fontaine, and Marcel Schnee) hope you enjoy this edition.
Printed by The Print Shop in the Village, marcelprints@outlook.com.