

The THOMPSON LAKE

OBSERVER

Winter 2009

Issue No. 154



*Winter comes early to Thompson Lake.
(Photo Kathy Cain)*

PRESIDENTS' MESSAGE

TLEA NEEDS 200 NEW MEMBERS IN 2009

As you read through this issue of the *Observer*, you will see many of the things TLEA is doing to keep Thompson Lake one of the cleanest, most pristine lakes in Maine. Over the years membership levels have been just about enough to pay our normal operating expenses. This is in large part because TLEA is an **all-volunteer organization**. There is no executive director, administrative assistant – just volunteers. 100% of the membership contributions go towards keeping Thompson Lake healthy.

One of TLEA's most important projects is the Youth Conservation Corps, a group of young people who have been solving erosion control problems around the lake since 2002. According to its coordinator, Joe Kiley, the YCC completed a total of 25 such projects this summer, working in all four towns on the lake. Although property owners pay for materials used, TLEA pays the rest. During a typical year, the YCC has an income of \$15,000 from the four towns on the lake. But its expenses total \$25,000, mostly for wages and insurance.

As you can see, TLEA needs an additional \$10,000 in income for the YCC. Because the budget is already tight, our only other alternative is to reduce the number of projects each year from about 25 to about 15. That's not a good alternative.

There are about 1200 potential TLEA members who live on or near the lake. Theoretically, all 1200 should be members because all 1200 benefit from what TLEA and the YCC do each year. But last year's actual membership was only 400. **Our goal for 2009 is to attract 200 new members. If each new member makes a minimum contribution of \$50, we'll have the \$10,000 the YCC needs** to continue its good works in 2009. To those of you reading this who are not members, be aware that **TLEA needs you**. In the next couple of weeks, TLEA will be sending out a special letter urging you to join. Please respond!

We wish you a happy and healthy winter.

Kathy Cain and Sue Ellis,
Co-Presidents

TLEA ANNOUNCES \$215,000 FUNDRAISING DRIVE TO ELIMINATE MILFOIL BY 2013

Maine has over 6,000 lakes and ponds. Of these only 21 have a documented infestation of variable leaf milfoil. Unfortunately, Thompson Lake is one of these 21, and it also has some of the most heavily infested areas in the entire state.

What is variable leaf milfoil? It is an aquatic plant ranked as exotic because it is not native to our area. It is also invasive. If left alone, it will dominate all plant life and threaten the existence of the native plants that are critical to the life of lakes like Thompson. Because it can grow at a peak rate of six inches a week, its coverage and area density can multiply by five to ten times each year. In Lower Suncook Lake in New Hampshire, variable milfoil increased its coverage from about 1% to almost half the lake in only three years. In three years, then, one small fragment can lead to a major infestation in any water body.

Why should we care? Because healthy lakes are important to all of us, not just for recreational uses like fishing, boating, and swimming but also because of the tranquility and beauty they contribute to the landscape. For many of us, property values are also important. The town of Laconia, New Hampshire, had to devalue the property values of one lakefront area by 10 to 15 percent because of its milfoil infestation. Closer to home, the town of Limerick, Maine, lowered assessment rates on Arrowhead Lake shorefront property by 10 to 15%. Observers there noted, "There is little doubt that property located on a lake infested with milfoil that is not being managed will be less valuable than similar property on the lake with no impairment."

Thompson Lake Environmental Association has responded aggressively to its milfoil invasion. After experimenting for three years with smothering milfoil plants in small areas with benthic barriers, the directors concluded the process was too slow and labor-intensive. Simply put, the milfoil was growing at a faster rate than we could eradicate it by using the benthic barrier system. TLEA decided instead to follow the example and recommendations of other lake associations in southern Maine which had been using pontoon boats outfitted with special sluiceway equipment and vacuum pumps. These groups found that the use of the special boats greatly facilitated and sped up the removal of milfoil. This summer TLEA spent more than \$51,000 to purchase, outfit, and operate its own pontoon boat, the Hippobottomus, which was staffed with three divers for nine weeks. Despite some initial problems in working out the kinks of the new system, the divers succeeded in hand pulling and removing 44,000 pounds of milfoil from Thompson Lake in those nine weeks.

Scott Bernardy, chair of TLEA's Milfoil Removal Project, indicates it will take six years to eliminate all variable milfoil from Thompson Lake. The total estimated

cost is \$215,000. To help TLEA raise this amount, Barry Jorve, chair of the Milfoil Fundraising Drive, has set up five separate but coordinated efforts: Major Gifts; Contributions from Individuals; Contributions from TLEA; Foundation Grants; and Contributions from Towns. Gifts from individuals will be collected over a three-year period. Other fund raising will be spread out over six years.

The plan calls for over 60 percent, or \$135,000 to come from sources other than individuals or families living near the lake. That still means that TLEA will be depending on its members and friends on the lake for \$80,000. That's a lot of money in these difficult economic times. But milfoil doesn't stop growing during economic downturns, and Thompson Lake can't wait for better times.

Our budget for Contributions from Members for 2009 is \$17,000. This membership money will go towards our "normal" expenses of about \$17,000 to fund the Observer newsletter (\$4000); water analysis (\$5,000); building and supplies (\$6,000); office supplies and postage (\$1,000); and scholarships (\$4,000). Because the operating budget is so tight, we need a very successful Milfoil Fund Raising Drive to accomplish our goal of eliminating milfoil on Thompson.

When you receive your letter from TLEA asking for help and support, please respond generously. None of us even want to think about what could happen to our quality of life and property values if something bad happens to the lake. We are counting on your tax deductible contribution to the Milfoil Fund Raising Drive to help us win the fight against milfoil.



December ice frames a bit of the lake in Sue Ellis's cold photo.

MLEA's DIRECTOR OF THE MONTH

Early in January, MLEA directors learned of the death of Jim Bishop, one of our longest serving and hardest working members. In mid December Jim went into the Maine Medical Center for a foot operation. While waiting there for additional heart surgery, Jim got busy with his Rolodex and telephone, making sure that MLEA and Otisfield town officials didn't slack off during his absence. Unfortunately, medical matters didn't go as planned. He died only a few days after being transferred to a hospice facility in Auburn. He was 79 years old and leaves his wife, Ellen, three grown children, and a number of grandchildren.



Even before learning of his death, MLEA had already planned to name Jim its Director of the Month. The honor goes to Jim for his years of dedicated service in managing the Courtesy Boat Inspection Program, supervising the Youth Conservation Corps, spearheading the Watershed Surveys for soil erosion problems, directing the grant writing process, and worrying about the private and public roads surrounding Thompson Lake. We will miss Jim at future directors meetings, especially his deliberate, thoughtful statements that usually began, "You know, there are two or three things we really ought to be doing . . ." Jim was always the first to volunteer to do those things.

IN MEMORIAM

Ted Slattery died in Arlington, Mass., on October 25. MLEA members will remember him from his twenty years of retirement on Megquier Island in Oxford. Born in South Dakota, Ted received an engineering degree before serving as an officer in the Marines in World War II. He married Margaret Edwards of Santa Barbara, California. Following a brief career with General Electric, Ted worked most of his life as an educational consultant in such underdeveloped nations as Indonesia, Malaysia, Zambia, and Greece. After their retirement, Ted and Margaret became involved in Thompson Lake Environmental Association, for which Margaret served as president for many years. Ted, who leaves his wife and a large family of children and grandchildren, was 90 years old.

TLEA FACES MAJOR FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

As you've read elsewhere in the *Observer*, TLEA needs to dramatically increase its income so that it can continue to eliminate milfoil and carry out needed YCC erosion control projects. If we don't aggressively address serious erosion and milfoil problems, the quality of the lake will suffer. This in turn could lead to significant decline in lake-front property values.

Business as usual won't get the job done. As part of the association's new hard-line approach, TLEA has named director Barry Jorve as Chair of the Membership Committee and also head of the Milfoil Fund Raising Drive. TLEA's membership goal for this year is to add 200 new members. Over the next six years TLEA's Milfoil Drive intends to raise \$215,000. Some of Barry's new and different approaches are:

1. **An anonymous survey** sent to 200 non-members asks what TLEA needs to do differently to attract **new members**. If you were one of the households receiving this survey, please help us out by returning it today. Results will be reported in the spring *Observer*.
2. **Town membership chairs:** One or more persons in each of the four lake towns has been named to spearhead the membership campaign and milfoil fundraising in that town. These volunteers are: for Casco, Ed Leonard; for Otisfield, Maddy Caggiano; for Poland, Stan and Cathy Tetenman; for Oxford, Pete Laverdiere. You can expect to hear from them soon, and often. Please respond generously.
3. **Road associations:** TLEA is asking the presidents of the various home or road associations around the lake to take a more active role by backing our fundraising efforts.
4. **Change in membership requests:** In the past, the annual appeal for membership contributions has gone out in the Winter *Observer*. This year, members will receive their dues notification by separate, first-class mail in early February. The mailing will go to 300 households who have been members for the last five years; to 100 who were members in 2008; to 100 who were members in 2006 and 2007; and to 700 households on the lake who may never have joined.

Each of these mailings will ask you to send in your membership dues for 2009 and will also ask for your contribution to the Milfoil Fund.

5. Possible increase in *Observer* mailings: Normally the *Observer* is sent each quarter to all members and once a year to non-members as well. This year we hope we can afford to send all four issues to everyone living near the lake so that everyone can read all about TLEA's good deeds and, we hope, join us as members and milfoil fund contributors.

6. More details about Milfoil Fundraising Drive to come: We'll share more details of our Milfoil Fundraising Drive with you in the Spring *Observer*. Rest assured that TLEA is pursuing a wide variety of funding sources.

Got some good ideas about what TLEA should be doing to increase our membership and/or obtain funds to support the Milfoil Drive? Please call your Town Chairman or Barry Jorve at 207-627-7481. We need good minds to go with good deeds!

ICE OUT CONTEST 50/50 PRIZE

Sponsored by Thompson Lake Environmental Association

Guess the date of Ice Out on Thompson Lake
Split the Total 50/50 with TLEA
(Or divide half with other lucky guessers)

Final day for receipt of guess - March 15, 2009
\$5 for each guess

Mail to: TLEA, PO Box 25, Oxford, ME 04270
Name _____
Address _____
Telephone No. _____
Date(s) _____
_____ dates @ \$5 = \$ _____



"The trip of a lifetime": Teacher Sandy Roderick, 2nd from right, and assorted Oxford sixth-graders at Oxford Recreation Center on November 21, where they presented TLEA directors with a program about their three-day study trip to Arcadia National Park. TLEA's \$2200 contribution made this trip possible.

CONTACTING TLEA

If you need to contact TLEA, here are some directors' home phone numbers:

Co-President	Kathy Cain - 783-7531
Membership & Milfoil Fund	Barry Jorve - 627-7481
Treasurer	Chris Pottle - 539-2218
YCC	Joe Kiley - 743-0014
Environmental	Scott Bernardy - 650-7638
Newsletter	Jean Hankins - 539-2521

OTISFIELD LAKES GROUP MEETS AGAIN

The Otisfield Lakes Association held its second meeting of the year on November 12 at the Otisfield Town Office, with Pixie Williams presiding. About ten persons were on hand, representing Thompson Lake, Saturday Pond, Moose Pond, and the Pleasant Lake-Parker Pond group. Also attending were newly re-elected Maine House Representative Jim Hamper, Otisfield selectman Hal Ferguson, and Beth Damon, chair of the Otisfield Conservation Committee.

The main feature of the evening was a power point presentation by Scott Williams, Executive Director of the Maine Volunteer Lake Monitors Program. Scott described the basic water quality characteristics of each Otisfield lake. He also outlined the history of Secchi disk readings in each. Scott pointed out that although Thompson is known to be blessed with exceptionally good water quality, the Maine Department of Environmental Protection considers it an **at risk lake** because of its slow three-year flushing rate and concerns about lake-shore development.

Each of the representatives presented details about recent activities on their lake. Speaking for TLEA, Jim Bishop summarized the work of Lake Day volunteers, the Youth Conservation Corps, the Courtesy Boat Inspectors, the spring watershed surveyors, and the removal of 44,000 pounds of milfoil from Thompson. Those present at the meeting agreed that sessions like this should be held at least annually. Such local reunions give us a chance to learn from each other.



OFFICE SPACE AVAILABLE?

TLEA may be looking for new office and meeting space in the next few months. We need one meeting room large enough to accommodate 16 directors once a month. We also need space for two desks, a computer station, some filing cabinets, and the like. Bathrooms are also a prerequisite. If you know of such a place for rent or loan, please notify Co-President Kathy Cain at 783-7531 or email to kcain@roadrunner.com.

CASCO AND POLAND TO BE SURVEYED IN MAY

TLEA, with the assistance of experts from the Maine Department of Environmental Protection, will survey the Casco and Poland parts of Thompson Lake watershed on the weekend of May 2. This spring's survey will be the second of three planned for the entire lake. The first phase, covering most of the Otisfield watershed, was conducted in April 2008. TLEA has recently issued a full report of that survey, including details of the 90-odd erosion sites spotted by volunteers. The third survey, planned for 2010, will include Oxford and the remaining part of Otisfield not covered earlier.

When completed, the three surveys will provide an up-to-date data base which TLEA, the four towns, and road associations will use to prioritize future remedial work. According to Joe Kiley, director of TLEA's Youth Conservation Corps, "Although the first phase of the new survey was conducted in April, this summer the YCC was able to use the results of that survey to work on some of the problem sites in Otisfield, with the cooperation of individual landowners."

TLEA funded the Otisfield survey without outside help but has received a grant from the DEP to help pay for the 2009 survey of Casco and Poland. After forming a steering committee to administer the project, we will be looking for some 20 volunteers to serve as on-site surveyors for the May 2 weekend. If you can help, please call Jean Hankins, 539-2521.



Beaver woodworking project near Black Island causeway. (Photo, Sue Ellis)

[Editor's note: The following article by Maggie Shannon is excerpted from a recent newsletter of the Maine Congress of Lake Associations.]

THE STATE TAKES AIM AT GRAVEL ROADS, BUT WHO WILL FOOT THE BILL?

Despite many state programs and strenuous efforts by lake and watershed managers, **Maine lakes are on a stubborn downward slide.** 26 of our great ponds failed to meet federal Clean Water Act standards in 2005; today that number has risen to 32. Some 239 lakes, including Thompson, are now classed as “at risk from development,” a comforting phrase that masks the truth: If we don't change our habits soon, Maine will face 239 expensive restoration projects around 2030.

Public Enemy #1: The Maine Department of Environmental Protection has estimated that **at least 60 percent of lake degradation is caused by erosion and sedimentation from improperly maintained gravel roads,** most of which are private. To stem this tide of destruction, the DEP recently proposed legislation to encourage proper maintenance of private roads in lake watersheds.

What the State suggests: Presently, the legislation reads, “**A municipality may adopt an ordinance** that includes an assessment of an annual fee to property owners whose properties are accessed by a private road if the private road **serves three or more seasonal** or year-round dwellings; is **located in whole or in part within a lake watershed;** and **is not constructed or maintained** in accordance with **road standards** for the protection of lake water quality as provided for in the municipal ordinance.”

Also, the DEP will develop guidance on appropriate rural standards. The amount assessed per lot must be based on the estimated cost to upgrade the road to meet municipal standards. In order to achieve the state's goal of stable or improving waters, the lakefront property owners and municipalities **must find a way to cooperate.** Their relationship may already be complicated by honest differences and past history.

[For more on this issue and proposed legislation, please read the entire article available through www.mainecla.org]

Visit our website at:
home.gwi.net/~tlea

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P. O. Box 25
Oxford, ME 04270

OBSERVER

Published quarterly by the
Thompson Lake Environmental Association
(207) 539-4535
Editor: Jean Hankins

Non-Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Oxford, ME 04270
Permit # 71