

The THOMPSON LAKE

# OBSERVER

Summer 2008

Issue No. 152



*Five-year old Sean Bellwood of Hampton, Maine, shows off his first limit of three togue on May 16, while fishing with grandfather Art Bellwood on Thompson Lake.*

**TLEA ANNUAL MEETING  
AUGUST 2  
9 - 11:30 A.M.  
AGASSIZ VILLAGE, POLAND  
(Details on page 4)**

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Another season! The ice came in, the ice went out, and life has come full circle again. Hopefully you all had a safe and healthy winter and are now ready for an enjoyable summer on our beautiful lake.

TLEA's directors have been most active, as you will read in the articles in this *Observer*; running and participating in Lake Day; surveying much of the lake for nonpoint source pollution; planning summer events like the boat regatta, annual meeting, and pig roast; and, most time consuming of all, buying, outfitting, and contracting with a crew for TLEA's new milfoil eradicator, the *Hippobottamus*.

To keep our organization thriving, we need more new people on the lake to join TLEA. If you have a new neighbor, or know of someone who's new, please send us their name and address so that we can mail them our homeowner packet to inform them of the positive impact they can have on their new surroundings. Some of the new arrivals on the lake may be city folks who don't realize that fertilized lush lawns and wide open vistas don't do much for the lake's water quality.

Previously I've written about the need to preserve your duff. Duff is the pine needle or leaf covering on the forest floor which acts as a great sponge and helps absorb phosphorus runoff into the lake. So treat it as a friend. Leave it alone. Don't rake it up. And please don't cut those lovely trees and shrubs along the shore. They too act as a barrier for runoff.

With gas prices rising, maybe we'll see more non-motorized watercraft this summer. TLEA used to sponsor some wonderful sailboat races. Anyone out there want to start a club? Let us know. While we now sponsor the "I did a paddle," perhaps we could extend our efforts and also set up an obstacle course for kayak races. Anyone out there interested? Although the lake's large size makes it hard to plan events, we can do it with lots of help from all of you.

So, have a safe and happy summer. Be sure to wave when you see me out on the lake in my kayak.

Sue Ellis, Co-President

## ICE WENT OUT ON APRIL 24

Who woulda guessed it? Thompson's ice departed on April 24, precisely one day later than last year. Four of us did guess it and won \$40 each. The wise ones are:

Tom Ray  
Joe Zilinsky  
Mary Anne Quitmeyer  
Kenneth Leary

For those of us keeping a close eye on this important breaking news, it looked like ice out was going to be April 23 again this year. That day was unusually warm for the time of year, over 70 degrees, and clouds of vapor were rising out of the lake. But this editor's frantic emails to TLEA's judges came back with negative replies. No, the ice was not out on April 23, so said the observers at the marina in Casco. As usual, the southern end of the lake remained iced up later than the north end. Then when the bright sun broke out at dawn on the 24<sup>th</sup>, it showed a lake with nothing but blue. We had ice out. And we had four winners. Congratulations to you all!



*The day before ice out, Tom Burchard kayaks around the ice in Black Island Cove (Photo Sue Ellis).*

## TLEA SUMMER EVENTS

**July 19 – 4<sup>th</sup> Annual I-Did-a-Paddle, Casco to Oxford, 9 a.m.** Wind/Rain date July 26. Pizza lunch provided at Pismo Beach by Rustic Pizza of West Poland, 11:15 to 12:30. All regatta participants must register and wear a number. Support boats will accompany.

**August 2 - TLEA Annual Meeting, Agassiz Village, West Poland, 9-11:30 a.m.** Speakers will be **Dana Lee**, Town Manager of Poland; **Dr. Scott Bernardy**, Chair of TLEA's Environmental Committee, giving details of the Hippobottamus Milfoil Eradication Project; and lake biologist **Scott Williams**, on the study of zooplankton on Thompson. Also to be voted on is the following amendment to TLEA's by-laws: To change the definition of officers from: "The officers of the TLEA shall be a President, Vice-President, Secretary..." to the following: "The officers of the TLEA shall be a President (or Co-Presidents), Vice-President, Secretary..." The purpose of the amendment is to legitimize the practice of splitting the presidency into two (or more) positions. Officers will be elected.

**August 16 - Third annual Pig Roast and Barbecue, Agassiz Village, West Poland. Pig roast provided by Harvest Hills Market; salads, baked beans, and desserts by Eggcettera. Live music by the Travis Humphrey Band.** Cost: \$15 for adults; children under 12 free. Tickets must be purchased or reserved by August 8. Call TLEA at 539-4535, or call Sharon Rice at 998-2088 or email [jgrice62@yahoo.com](mailto:jgrice62@yahoo.com) for your tickets.

## JUNE'S SECCHI DISK READINGS UNUSUALLY GOOD

For some years now, TLEA's Bob Tracy has been measuring the clarity of the lake with the aid of a Secchi disk which he lowers near the deepest part of the lake, at Hayes Point in Oxford. When Bob did his usual measure in the middle of June, he was amazed to read an extraordinary 11.1 meters. To put this in perspective, this compares to the historical average reading, since 1971 when lake clarity was first recorded, of about 9 meters. And it's a far cry better than the 7.9 meters recorded in the spring of 2005, a spring of heavy runoff into the lake.

Unable to believe what he was seeing, Bob did a follow up measurement on June 26, at the same spot in the lake. On his first try he could spot the Secchi disk at an even greater distance, 11.7 meters. The second test result was even better – an extraordinary 12.3 meters, nearly 40 feet. If this figure does not set a new clarity record, it must come close. A couple of factors may be responsible: TLEA's ongoing efforts to halt nonpoint source pollution of the lake, and the unusually gentle snowmelt and runoff this spring.

## YOUNG ENVIRONMENTALISTS TRAINED AT LAKE DAY 2008

Lake Day weather can be unpredictable, but it doesn't really matter. The previous day, May 27, temperatures rose into the mid-80s. On Lake Day, however, following the arrival of a cold front out of Canada, the mercury struggled to reach 60, and a brisk westerly breeze chilled the Agassiz Village waterfront. Not to worry. Around 9:30 a.m. school buses started depositing their cargo of 180 enthusiastic sixth graders representing the elementary schools at Hebron Station, Oxford, Otisfield and South Paris. Each child had been previously assigned to one of six groups, designated by colors, so that the students from various schools would be intermingled.



*Lake Day 2008: Bailey Oliver of Paris Elementary uses a solar panel to run a small electric motor (Photo, Bob Tracy).*

At the Agassiz Village beach, Mike Andrews, an Inland Fisheries and Wildlife employee, greeted the assembly and explained how the Casco Fish Hatchery raises salmon from eggs to fingerlings. Then he released some 250 fish into the lake. His way, he stated, was better than nature's way: the hatchery's survival rate is 90 percent, compared to only 2 percent of the naturally raised fish.

TLEA reps Tom Ray and Kathy Cain met with small student groups to discuss water quality testing and the threat of invasive plants like milfoil. At another station, Stephanie Arsenaault of the Maine Energy Education Program issued packets containing small solar panels and tiny electric motors. As kids assembled these devices and the small motors began to whir, they learned how sunlight can be converted to electrical energy. Nearby, Chris Pottle, also a TLEA director, reviewed climate change on earth since the Ice Age and discussed man's apparent impact on global warming. Using a Prius hybrid

vehicle provided by the state, he illustrated how we can reduce emissions of carbon dioxide and the consumption of fossil fuels.

Master Maine Guide Dick Walthers and an associate instructor then instructed youngsters in casting a fly line, using Agassiz's tennis court as a snag-free "stream." In an adjacent arena, Jo Nickerson and Fred Schwarmer, Paris Elementary School teachers, ran the "Muddy Water" exercise. They set up a tub of clear water into which students dumped various contaminants, simulating the effects of fertilizers, soaps, oil, cigarette butts, and grass clippings on the watershed.

Once again Oxford's Sandy Roderick, a TLEA director, coordinated the day's activities. Other sixth grade teachers prepared advance classroom activities and accompanied the youths as they progressed from site to site, taking notes, asking questions, and completing assignment sheets. This year marked the eighth successive year that TLEA has conducted and sponsored this significant Lake Day event. This means that the first sixth graders to experience Lake Day are now of college age. As one TLEA director put it recently, "What Lake Day has done is produce a whole new generation of environmentalists."

### **COURTESY BOAT INSPECTORS BEGIN 8<sup>TH</sup> YEAR**

Way back in 2002 TLEA responded quickly to the hue and cry about invasive plants invading Maine's lakes. For most of that summer, a number of TLEA directors and other volunteers spent long weekend hours at the Thompson Lake Marina, the Oxford boat landing, and Pismo beach, handing out information about invasive plants and checking boats entering and leaving the lake for hitchhiking fragments.

Since 2002 the State has provided most of the funds for the program through its so-called Milfoil Sticker Program. TLEA itself provides additional funding for the inspectors, who work mainly weekends and holidays from Memorial Day through Labor Day. Jim Bishop, TLEA's CBI Inspector General, has volunteered his organizational talents and time almost since the beginning.

You've probably seen these individuals sitting near the boat launch areas, wearing sunglasses and lots of sunscreen. This year's group of inspectors consists of a three-year veteran, Gary Garcelon of Oxford, as well as four newcomers: Matt McVety and Laurie Riihimaki of Otisfield, Tate Tibbets of Oxford, and Ian Hodgkiss of Poland. Give them a smile and a wave when you drive by. They're doing important work.

## **MANY VOLUNTEERS CONDUCT LARGE SURVEY**

A large group of volunteers made easy work of surveying a large part of the Thompson Lake Watershed on the weekend of April 26-27. Perfect weather conditions made the job easier, as did the leadership of specialists from the Maine Department of Environmental Protection. The goal was to search for, photograph, and record erosion problems on the western side of Thompson, roughly from Otisfield Cove south to the Otisfield-Casco town line, making on-the-spot recommendations for remedial work. Organizers believe it will take at least three years to completely survey the lake, a task last done in 1994 and 1999. The data base resulting from the survey will be an invaluable tool for TLEA in the future years. It will also serve as a foundation stone for future grant requests.

The long day began with a two-hour training session at the East Otisfield Baptist Church, a joint effort with the Saturday Pond Association, which was conducting its own survey. During this time Kristen Feindel and Wendy Garland of the DEP explained the purposes and methods of the survey. The 21 TLEA volunteers then divided into six teams, each led by a professional, and each assigned to one geographic sector of the watershed. Each time a problem was located, it was precisely recorded with the aid of GPS devices, digital cameras, hand-drawn maps, and forms. This data will be maintained in TLEA's files and updated when necessary.

All property owners were notified in advance about the survey. A few preferred not to have surveyors visit their property, a choice that TLEA was careful to honor.

TLEA volunteers included Ed Phillips, Chris and Marcia Pottle, Joe Kiley, Jean Hankins, Bill Troy, Peter Arnsten, Ethel Turner, Madelyn and Tony Caggiano, Stan Tetenman, Tom Ray, Bob Tracy, Justin Cincotti, Kathy Cain, Marion Carlyle, Sue Marr, John Schrader, and Sherri Dunton. Special thanks go to two Otisfield teenagers, Sarah Burnham and Laurie Riihimaki, who joined in. Technical experts included Phoebe Hardesty, formerly of the Androscoggin Valley Soil and Water Conservation District, Jeff Stern, Margaret Chabot, Megan Wooster, Mary Ellen Dennis, and Denise Blanchette. In the days following the April 26 survey, Jean Hankins and Jeff Stern checked some sites

and filled in missing information. All together these volunteers contributed a lot of hours.

The surveyors found more than 90 erosion sites. The impact of these sites was estimated as ranging from low to high, with estimated solution costs also ranging from low to high. Many of the sites were located on town or private roads. Others, usually less severe, involved residential property, especially driveways and waterfront areas. With the help of Jeff Stern and an Americorps volunteer from DEP, TLEA will be publishing a full report of the survey which it will deliver to town officials, interested members, and the general public, probably in the fall. Building on our success this spring, we have already submitted a proposal to the DEP to help fund the next survey, to be conducted in April 2009, covering the parts of the watershed that fall in the towns of Casco and Poland. And, of course, the effort to repair the erosion sites has already started.



*Team leader Megan Wooster marks an erosion site on a private road near Edwards Cove during the April 26 watershed survey.*

## HIPPOBOTTAMUS LAUNCHES INTO LAKE

It took months of planning, many learning experiences, a couple of emergency directors meetings, and some disappointments. It also involved a big cash outlay and just the right number of dedicated workers contributing their talents and ingenuity at just the right time. TLEA's milfoil-fighting pontoon boat, named *The Hippobottamus*, finally wallowed into the water on June 21.

Until almost the last minute, the TLEA directors had expected a pontoon boat would be donated. The last-minute withdrawal of that offer caused some frantic searching through *Uncle Henry's* for a 24-foot boat to purchase. Finally one surfaced right in our backyard, at Thompson Lake Marina. Meanwhile, the sluiceway system, hoses, and pump had been sent in heavy boxes from California and were sitting, boatless, in the Hankins barn in Otisfield. Once the boat arrived, Scott Bernardy and his committee put it all together. Boat specialist Ed Leonard and mechanic Bob Tracy performed hours of hard labor getting the craft modified from recreational to working boat.

The actual work of extracting the milfoil will be done by Rob McVety of McVety Milfoil Removal, Otisfield, during nine or ten weeks this summer. McVety will use divers to hand pull the milfoil plants, which will be vacuumed onto the boat's sluiceway, drained, and bagged. The nutrient-rich milfoil, which makes excellent mulch, will be disposed of on private property.

This type of operation is still evolving. The big advantage of the vacuum-sluiceway system over the placement of benthic barriers, which TLEA has used in the past, is that it greatly speeds up the eradication process. This system was first used only two or three years ago on Little Sebago Lake. The Lakes Environmental Association in Bridgton, which has a year's experience with the new system, has provided much-needed advice and helped train TLEA's three-person crew.

The TLEA harvest began on June 24 at Pine Point, one of the most severely infested areas of Thompson. Other areas targeted are Otisfield Cove and Edwards Cove, where the divers will remove any stragglers remaining after the removal of the tarps placed over the winter.

**Boaters and others in the area are warned to slow down to wake speed and stay at least 200 feet away from the Hippobottamus, for safety's**

**sake. Be aware that a red and white divers' flag indicates when a diver is beneath the surface. You may also notice a kayaker retrieving floating fragments in the area.** If you find any milfoil fragments, please remove them from the lake and dispose of them properly.

Special thanks are owed to Scott Bernardy and Tom Ray, who served as chief negotiators for obtaining the boat; Ed Leonard, who served as TLEA's boat expert; and Bob Tracy, mechanical wizard.

P.S. A word about the name "Hippobottamus," the unanimous choice of the TLEA directors. The name was submitted by Diane Morris of Tallahassee, Florida. Thanks, Diane!

## **YOUTH CONSERVATION CORPS BEGINS NEW SEASON**

Milfoil may come and go, but nonpoint source pollution goes on forever. At least that's the argument underpinning the work of TLEA's successful Youth Conservation Corps, now beginning its seventh year. As most TLEA members know by now, the YCC consists of a crew of young people, headed by an adult coordinator, who spend their summer fixing erosion problems throughout the watershed. The crew, who use only hand tools, perform their labor free to the landowner, who pays only for the materials used. In the past six years, previous groups have built countless box culverts, installed razor bars, designed buffer gardens, fortified ditches with riprap, and constructed stone steps. Their work over the years has not only kept a lot of driveways from washing out but has also prevented tons of phosphorus-bearing sediment from reaching the lake.

The person to talk to is **Joe Kiley**, TLEA's veteran coordinator, who also assists property owners with obtaining the necessary town and DEP permits. He can be reached at the TLEA office at Robinson Mill, at **539-4535**, or at his Otisfield home, **743-0014**. Our crew chief this year is Drew McClaren, who served on the YCC crew last year. New crew members this year are Caleb Hill, who will be spending the summer with relatives living near Greeley Brook; Jessie Pierce, of Oxford; and Justin St. John, of Harrison. Justin is the son of Otisfield's Code Enforcement Officer, Richard St. John.

**Call Joe if you have an erosion problem or possible problem! According to Joe, "We are currently in a position to take on more projects." His advice is free!**

## REMEMBER MAINE'S BOATING RULES!

**The Safety Zone:** Maine's Safety Zone includes all water within 200 feet of the shoreline. Boats must maintain a minimum speed in this area, defined as the lowest speed at which you can maintain steering and control of your watercraft. This important rule protects swimmers. It also protects the shoreline from erosion caused by the boat's wash or wave.

**Waterskiing:** Waterskiing, towing, and surfing are prohibited in the safety zone.

**Personal flotation devices:** You must have Coast Guard approved personal flotation devices (lifejackets) on your boat, and they must be kept readily available. If you are in a canoe or kayak or if your boat is less than 16 feet long, you **must have a wearable PFD for each person on board**. If your boat is 16 feet or longer, you must also have one PFD for each person, **plus one throwable device**.

For more information, consult the 2008 State of Maine Boating Laws and Rules, available at your town office, or consult [www.maine.gov/ifw](http://www.maine.gov/ifw).



*Rob McVety (in water) and Chris McVety launching the Hippobottamus, Otisfield Cove, June 24 (Photo Bob Tracy).*

Visit our website at:  
[home.gwi.net/~tlea](http://home.gwi.net/~tlea)

Thompson Lake Environmental Association  
P. O. Box 25  
Oxford, ME 04270

**OBSERVER**

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