

## President's Letter

Dear fellow members,

It has been five years since we “re-created” the Watchic Lake Association in 2007. At that time, we set the mechanisms in place to support our mission: Preserve, Protect, and Enhance Watchic Lake. We had the choice to 1) Make Things Happen, 2) Watch Things Happen, or 3) Have Things Happen to Us. We chose #1, to Make Things Happen. And we have had some great accomplishments in the intervening five years:

- Creation of a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt, non-profit entity with new by-laws;
- Launching a major capital fund drive;
- Rebuilding the Dam;
- Completing the Paine Neighborhood Runoff Remediation Project (for more information see article elsewhere in this newsletter);
- Launching a supplemental capital fund drive to support the Paine project.

While we have a track record of accomplishment, we also know that the risks facing our lake have not subsided one bit. Indeed, as we look forward, we see the increasing threat of invasive aquatic species, and the growing threat of polluted storm runoff from development in the watershed.

We also recognize that we are on our own, as an organization, if a crisis hits Watchic Lake. We cannot expect government

assistance of any kind in a timely manner. As many other lake associations have discovered when problems arise, we ourselves need to be fully responsible for dealing with these issues. To that end, we expect to take strides, over the next five years, to ensure that the protective mechanisms, both financial and human, are put in place to further our mission: Preserve, Protect, and Enhance Watchic Lake. We welcome your active participation in our organization.

Elsewhere in this letter, you will read about our most recent project to address polluted storm runoff in the Paine Historic Neighborhood. The ongoing Capital Fund Drive is also discussed. The DEP Lakesmart program, another project aimed at controlling storm runoff, is highlighted for your consideration. Finally, we review the functioning of our rebuilt DAM and our Education/Website endeavors.

Serving several years as trustee and now as WLA's new President, I'd like to thank you for your confidence and support. If you are not already a WLA member, I encourage you to join us in protecting your lake. Annual membership solicitation will take place in the spring newsletter – in May.

Summer will be here before you know it. See you on the lake.

Don Drew, President

March 11, 2012

## **Report on the Paine Neighborhood Runoff Remediation Project**

Late last summer, a major work effort was completed on a project which addressed a long-standing and significant problem for Watchic Lake. Much of the Watchic watershed is on the Route 113 side of the lake, where the land descends steeply from Oak Hill. The Paine Historic Neighborhood is located in this area. A storm water runoff problem existed in the Paine Neighborhood for many years. The problem was that storm water off of Oak Hill accumulated quickly and ran across active pastureland, over both State and dirt roads, and through several neighborhood septic systems, depositing nutrient-laden runoff into the north end of the lake. The result was frequent flooding of Route 113 in the Paine Neighborhood, flooding of Neighborhood properties, and most disturbingly, deterioration in Watchic Lake water quality, as evidenced by the increasing growth of metaphyton algae in the lake, indeed, even during the winter months. Metaphyton algae is a green cotton-candy like growth that spreads fast in warm weather. Metaphyton is an indicator of nutrient overload. The volume of active runoff also resulted in unusual open water on the north-eastern shore during the winter.

The cause of the uncontrolled runoff was multifaceted – residential development, clear-cut timber harvesting, agricultural development, failure of historic control accommodations, and possibly other factors. Over time, individual Paine Neighborhood property owners each attempted to remedy the situation on their own land, but such efforts only tended to create collateral damage on their own, or abutting properties. There never was one single cause/party responsible for the issue, and all remedies appeared very expensive, consequently, it was impossible to get multiple parties to focus on creating a unified solution.

Nevertheless, it was clear that something had to be done to stop this runoff for the sake of the lake.

WLA began to investigate options for addressing the Paine Neighborhood problem in 2008, after association members began to notice indicators of water quality decline, including the growth of metaphyton. WLA made progress during 2009, including bringing in Maine DEP, Cumberland County Soils and Water (CCSW) and the Town of Standish. The water quality experts told us that this source of heavy phosphorus loading posed a significant long-term risk to the lake – the whole lake. Over time, the metaphyton would spread, and water quality would diminish, if the source pollution could not be contained. We have worked too hard and come too far from the poor water quality present during the 1970s, to let that happen again.

In fall 2010, after talks with the Town of Standish, WLA committed to leading a unique private/public partnership to address the issue. There were three parties to the partnership: WLA, the Paine Neighbors, and the Town of Standish. An aerial survey was commissioned, engineering work begun, and fundraising commenced. The eventual solution involved a series of water control structures: retention berms, new ditching and swales, a retention pond, and filter beds. The DEP, CCSW and Town of Standish were critical and integral contributors to the proposed solution. Indeed, our relationships with these three entities are stronger now than ever before.

Several Paine Neighbors contributed their land for the control and containment structures. Also, a neighborhood horse farm (a nutrient contributor) joined the partnership creating the solution, and, further, began work with CCSW toward a federal nutrient management program grant.

WLA set an ambitious fundraising goal to fund the Paine Neighborhood work. We raised money from 1) landowners in the Paine Neighborhood, 2) other WLA members who do not own property in the Paine neighborhood, but who understood the long-term threat to the lake, 3) the Town of Standish, and 4) WLA itself. Raising money in the current economic climate was extremely difficult and the result was a tremendous success. As engineering work proceeded during the spring of 2011, it became clear that the budget for this project would exceed the fundraising goals. To remedy this issue, the WLA Board secured a line of credit which was partially offset by a Davis Conservation Foundation grant. Fund raising is ongoing in order to pay off the LOC. All of this work, fundraising included, took an enormous effort to compete.

The implemented solution functioned superbly, passing its first big test during Hurricane Irene in August. Several septic systems which, prior to the fix, were being inundated with runoff heading directly into the lake, are now functioning properly. Horse manure, which previously ran off the active pastures and into the lake, has been contained, with runoff moving through a filter bed at the edge of the pasture. Metaphyton has been reduced and is expected to decline further over time now that the nutrient loading has been stopped.

Gordy Billington, Town Manager for the Town of Standish, has praised the project, and especially the private/public partnership, as a model for dealing with problems of this sort. John Blake, from the CCSW Board of Supervisors praised the project and recommended it for a Davis grant, as did Wendy Garland, with the DEP Division of Watershed Management. Both have also lent their support to WLA's 2012 nomination for

a Maine Governor's Environmental Excellence Award.

Watchic Lake Association played a leadership role in pulling together the unique private/public partnership behind this effort, raising funds in a very challenging economic environment, and promoting/managing the engineering/sitework which ultimately solved a major environmental problem for Watchic Lake – a problem which, until this point, appeared to lack a feasible solution. WLA promised transparency throughout the process with regular meetings and written communications to those impacted/interested. We clearly expressed that this would be a journey and not an event and that the only way this could ever be brought to an effective conclusion, with results that would be lasting, was that everyone must be a participant throughout the entire process.

The Board of WLA concurs with Town Manager Billington that we have developed a model solution which can be replicated by other organizations trying to solve complex, multi-party issues in their area. Indeed, the project exemplifies WLA's long-term commitment to leadership in preserving and protecting Watchic Lake.

## **WLA LakeSmart – Round 4**

WLA began to sponsor the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) LakeSmart program in 2008 and will be continuing the program in 2012.

Lakesmart is a program that is designed to promote appropriate property maintenance practices for homeowners. Appropriate practices are meant to create a watershed environment that discourages phosphorus-laden storm runoff. The program has been in place for several years on other lakes in the state.

Watchic Lake Association's (WLA) mission is the protection of Watchic Lake. Watchic Lake has two principle enemies: Invasive Aquatic Plants (e.g. Milfoil) and phosphorus-laden storm runoff. You hear and see a lot about Milfoil – newspaper articles on infested lakes, etc. There is not quite as much visibility given to runoff, despite the significant threat it poses to our lakes. In fact, before Milfoil happened on the scene in the late 1990's runoff was the primary threat to Watchic. Indeed, runoff was responsible for the relatively poor water quality in Watchic that occurred during the 1970's and 1980s.

During the late 1990's WLA cooperated with Cumberland County Soil and Water District in a project which addressed runoff issues on public/camp roads. These projects included ditching and road improvements on Road 6 and Watchic Terrace, among others. These projects have helped to contribute to Watchic's water quality improvement.

We then turned our attention to improving private properties. This is where the Lakesmart program comes in. Lakesmart involves DEP-provided inspections of lakefront property with the goal of reviewing runoff control practices in place, and pointing out areas that could be better controlled. Properties which exhibit appropriate controls receive an award, together with signs that can be posted on your property to indicate receipt of the award. More importantly, properties that do not "pass" at first have the opportunity to take the remedial actions recommended and, in turn, receive the award. Properties that do not pass are not subject to fines or publicity.

The more properties that are "Lakesmart", the higher the likelihood that Watchic's water quality will continue to improve. We are very close to being in the DEP's highest

category – Gold Status – for LakeSmart awards. WLA has set a goal that at least 15% of lakefront properties will be "Lakesmart" within five years. We would love to exceed that goal.



Seven properties were inspected in 2011 and three received awards. We hope to engage ten more properties during 2012. If you or somebody you know would like to receive a Lakesmart inspection, please feel free to contact Charlie Tarbell (207-671-6962). We will begin the inspections in June and are only limited by the availability of the DEP inspectors.

Remember, there is no downside to the inspection. If you do not receive the award, you will not face any fine or find yourself on a "wall of shame". Instead, you will be given helpful tips to improve your property and, after remediation, can then be reinspected and receive the award.

## Capital Fund Drive

The WLA Capital Fund Drive has, to date, been a great success. With the commitment of 107 separate donations, your lake association has raised enough cash to cover dam renovation and partially support the Paine Neighborhood Project. Future pledges, over the next ten years, will support future protection efforts, such as establishing a Milfoil Reserve, to allow for rapid response to an infestation by an invasive aquatic plant.

Most of the donations for the Watchic Lake Association Capital Fund Drive came during the 2010 season. In 2011, there was substantial support for the supplementary Paine Project fundraising, but less so for the overall WLA Capital Fund Drive. During the summer of 2012, WLA will be making its final push to get around to all those individuals who have not yet had a chance to donate to the Capital Fund Drive. We will be discussing the important reasons for donating, such as ensuring your property value is protected by a well-endowed and active lake association. Several recent buyers of property around the lake have indicated that a major reason for choosing Watchic Lake is the presence of an active, well-managed lake association, prepared and funded to take immediate action on any issues, such as a milfoil infestation, that confront the lake. In this manner, your support of WLA's Capital Fund directly impacts your property values. If you have not had a chance, please join the 107 contributors in supporting WLA's Capital Fund when you are invited to do so this coming summer.

## Membership vs. Capital Fund Drive

It has come to our attention that there might be some confusion amongst stakeholders in Watchic Lake Association about the

difference between Capital Fund Drive donations and the WLA annual dues. We hope this piece will clarify the matter for all. WLA relies on annual membership dues to fund our annual operating expenses. These dues are solicited each year when we send out the spring newsletter. The expenses these annual dues cover include, but are not limited to: printing and mailing expenses, annual meeting expenses, maintaining an official registered agent, dam maintenance expenses, water testing, website expenses, and other recurring annual operations expenses. Your annual dues of \$25 per member go to cover these important expenses that keep WLA running year-in and year-out.

On the other hand, WLA conducted a Capital Fund Drive during 2010-2012. Funds raised via the Capital Fund Drive have gone to cover dam renovation costs, the Paine Neighborhood Runoff Remediation Project, and will support establishment of a Milfoil Reserve. These monies are "one-time" funds that cover major projects or create major assets against future potentially adverse events, such as a milfoil infestation.

While we greatly value your gifts to the WLA Capital Fund Drive, we also desperately need your annual membership support to keep our organization running year-in and year-out.

Thanks for your ongoing support.

## Dam

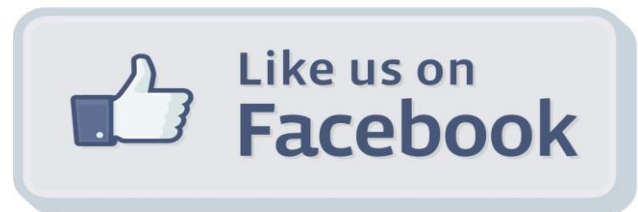
The newly designed and repaired dam functioned as planned for the 2011 season. The ice went out of the lake on April 17 (which is the average date) 2011. The lake level was 15” below the top of the gate. The water was flowing over the top of the new gate structure within a week. We opened the gate 10 times in 2011 to dump excess water. We usually have to open the gate several more times in any given year. There was a steady flow of water over the top of the gate in 2011 and subsequently kept a healthy flow of water in the lake. Can you imagine what our wharfs and waterfronts would have looked like if we had not opened the gate to dump all of the storm water from hurricane Irene ?

The gate was raised on our traditional date of Columbus Day (Oct 13th) 2011. The lake is lowered about 30” so that ice will not damage waterfront and by lowering at this time of year there is no damage to aquatic life. The gate will be lowered this spring as soon as the ice is out of the lake and allowed to fill up from rain and springs in the lake. There was only about 10-12 inches of ice this year, which is approximately one half of the amount of a normal winter. The gate house received a coat of preserving stain last fall. There are plans to rebuild the wooden gate which should last for another 20+ years. The association should be proud of the work they did to maintain the water quality and protection of our waterfronts. Please join us in our mission and become a member.

## Website/Education

The Education Committee is working on several events for the summer that will be educational regarding boat safety and environmental issues affecting lakes. Watch for announcements as to the date and time for these activities on the Watchic Lake Association website, [www.watchiclake.org](http://www.watchiclake.org).

Watchic Lake Association is now on Facebook!



‘Like’ us on Facebook and upload your favorite memories and photos of the lake. Additionally, the Education Committee will be updating the ‘Calendar’ feature on the website to keep you posted of fun and educational events around the lake and Standish. The committee will alert you to ‘Watershed’ and ‘Lake Quality’ updates to keep you apprised of situations that may threaten our enjoyment of Watchic lake. Please send us your ideas, announcements, and suggestions to Regina Rutter at [rmsr163@msn.com](mailto:rmsr163@msn.com).

**SAVE THE DATE:** July 7th - Saturday ‘Deck Your Dock’ Contest. This event is open to all residents. Decorate your dock in a spirited way by noon of July 7th.

## **Water Quality**

Water quality was tested continuously throughout summer 2011 at several spots around the lake. The results of those tests, which are routinely submitted to Kahtadin Analytic Labs for analysis, indicate that the water quality in Watchic Lake is trending above its historical level. Clarity was good and significant point sources of pollution were not noted. Eben Joslyn presented a detailed evaluation of water testing at the annual meeting in July.

## **Membership**

The mission of the Watchic Lake Association is to preserve and protect Watchic Lake. We are an active, fiscally-fit IRS 501C3 organization with a track record of taking action and resolving issues. We mail this newsletter to all stakeholders of the lake: property and ROW owners, local businesses, and others who have expressed an ongoing interest in Watchic Lake. We actively solicit all stakeholders to support the lake by become dues-paying members in the WLA. By supporting WLA, you are supporting your lake and promoting the protection of Watchic Lake, now and into the future. Please, join with us in becoming dues-paying members of WLA. A dues solicitation will be sent out with the Spring newsletter, but if you wish to join today, please see the membership information on our website: [www.watchiclake.org](http://www.watchiclake.org).

## **2012 Annual Meeting**

SAVE THE DATE: July 14<sup>th</sup> @ 3:00

## **Watchic Lake Association Board of Directors Elected July 2011**

Don Drew, President

Dave Bradbury, Dam Chair

Steve Bradbury

Matt Campbell

Steve Center, Capital Fund Chair

Patty Guenthner, Membership Chair

Bob Joslyn, Water Quality Chair

Steve Rines

Regina Rutter, Secretary, Education Chair

Charlie Tarbell, Treasurer