

We hope this spring greeting finds you, and your family and friends well. It was an unusual winter, with heavier and more frequent storms than in the past, lots of tree damage, and significant storm water runoff. The winter was fairly warm leading to the earliest ice-out date we've recorded on March 8 (about 3 to 4 weeks earlier than normal). Over the past year WLA volunteers have continued to manage and maintain the dam, monitor water quality and invasives, monitor the loons, and address other issues as they come up.

Want to help the lake and guide what the WLA does? There are several upcoming opportunities to get involved such as the Loon Count (July 20), Annual Plant Inventory (August 10), and serving on the board. Contact Paul McNulty or Stephanie Parker if interested. Emails below.

2024 Annual Meeting – July 6 at Standish Town Hall

Mark your calendars – we will hold our annual meeting on Saturday July 6, 2024, at 9:00 am at the Standish Municipal Center (Town Hall). Like previous meetings, we will provide a review of water quality including recent Cyanobacteria blooms, update on applying for a second DEP Section 319 Grant, loon news, offer tips on reducing stormwater runoff, and give members an opportunity to vote on new board members and officers (President and Vice President).

Check our website for more details at the Annual Meeting Section, including Draft Minutes from the 2023 Meeting, which will be approved at our 2024 meeting.

Membership and Donations 2024

Thank you to the many members that have recently joined or renewed. 2023 was a record year for membership with 166 people and 92 properties. If you have not already, we encourage you to join the association. Your support helps fund water quality testing, dam maintenance, invasive plant mitigation, and securing grants for lake property owners and road associations. Membership info can be found in the enclosed return envelope or our website under [Dues and Donations](#).

Every little bit helps, use [Hannaford Clynk](#) to make donations to the WLA with every bottle or can you return. WLA Clynk bag tags are now available at Standish Town Hall.

Do You Rent Your Property? Have Lots of Visitors?

Over the past few years more and more property owners have made their camps available to renters and visitors. Many visitors are not aware of the risks they can pose to the lake and lake wildlife. This is especially critical in keeping out invasive plants. Please ensure anyone using your property understands their responsibility to help keep the lake healthy and enjoyable for all.

Keep out Invasives: The State of Maine has strict laws related to the threat of invasive aquatic species. Invasive species are the biggest threat to the quality of life at Watchic Lake. Invasives generally enter a lake via contaminated watercraft. **As required by Maine law, inspect your boat, jet-ski, kayak, motor, trailer, fishing equipment, and live well prior to launching.** Drain your bilge pump and dispose of any plant life well away from the lake. Help keep Watchic Lake invasive-free.

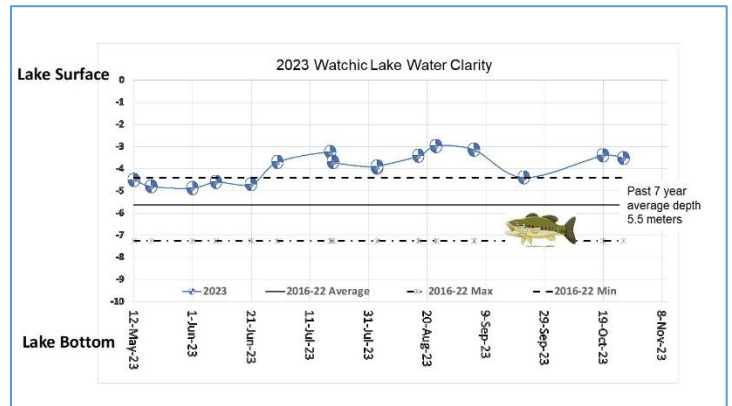
The WLA is reaching out to the rental property owners to encourage them to educate their clients. Even if you do not rent out your property, educating visitors makes sense for the lake. The WLA has drafted "[Visitors Guide](#)" which we have posted on our website, will bring to the annual meeting, and email to anyone interested.

Social Event Wednesday June 19, 5:30 at Carr's Family Restaurant

Join us at the Carr's Family Restaurant (380 Pequawket Trail), for a chance to get to know your Watchic Lake neighbors Wednesday June 19 from 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm. This is a great opportunity to socialize with others on the lake, learn about how you can help protect the lake, share experiences, and share a drink. Cash bar for a full range of drinks. Pizzas will be provided. Non-alcoholic drinks available.

Water Quality 2023 – A Difficult Year

2023 was a difficult year for the lake. The summer was rainy with several rain events greater than one inch. Historically, Watchic Lake has its worst years of water clarity when there is greater than normal rainfall. Using a Secchi disk and scope twice a month, volunteer monitors recorded lower water clarity readings than the 2016-2022 average. Many of the readings were in the 3-4 meter depths as opposed to an average around 5.5 meters. Going back to data since 1977, 2023 is a year that stands out with low Secchi disk readings. See chart.



Many people noticed a change in the color of the water which was recorded as higher than normal. Due to high precipitation totals causing increased runoff, Total Phosphorus levels were some of the highest ever recorded on Watchic. High Total Phosphorus means trouble for lakes because it is food for more plant growth.

In 2023, shoreline **cyanobacteria blooms** occurred around the lake in early September and late October. Cyanobacteria are generally a symptom of excessive stormwater running into the lake, exacerbated by warmer than normal water.

We can all help keep our lake clean and healthy! Please remain vigilant this year.

- Take action to reduce rainwater runoff into the lake. Contact Stephanie Parker (parker.stephanie@gmail.com) for best practices to avoid runoff.
- Note any changes in water color or large/unusual algal blooms by contacting David Burnell (dtburnell@gmail.com)
- Report strange plants to Stephanie Parker who will help evaluate the plants and address issues if needed.



The Dam

WLA volunteers opened the dam on March 13, about 5 days after ice-out. Ice-out dates have been steadily becoming earlier, raising questions about the best time to open the dam. The WLA will review this at our July annual meeting.

As of June 1, the water level at the dam was at about full pond. As always, volunteers will continue to monitor weather and the water level over the coming weeks and adjust the dam as needed to be within a few inches of full pond. Please keep in mind that water level observations will vary significantly around the lake due to differing wind conditions. Mother Nature and managing the water level of a 450-acre lake via a 10-foot-wide dam gate is an inexact science – your understanding is appreciated.

The Loons

At least two, and possibly three loon pairs have been spotted on the lake. Larger groups have “stopped by”. Normally loons return to the lake within days of ice-out, this year it appears that the loons returned 7-10 days after ice-out which is slightly later than normal. This could be due to the early (March 8) ice-out date. More info at the annual meeting.

Remember, loons dive deep and for minutes at a time in search of food. They can pop up anywhere at any time. Please keep an eye out for them and respect their space when boating.

Paul and Stephanie

Paul McNulty, President Watchic Lake Association (p3mcnulty@gmail.com)

Stephanie Parker, Vice President Watchic Lake Association (parker.stephanie@gmail.com)