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PLEASANT | PARKER *Lake | Pond* ASSOCIATION

DECEMBER 2024 NEWSLETTER

Dear Members of the Pleasant Lake/Parker Pond Association (PL/PPA) and others who enjoy our lakes:

I am honored to step into the role of President and look forward to building on the momentum of the last 12 months. Thank you to David Randall for his outstanding leadership over the past four years and his willingness to continue his role as Treasurer on the Executive Team.

2024 was a busy year and we made great progress in widening our communication throughout the community. We finalized the revised Watershed Protection Pamphlet and created a new Visitor's Guide, two resources that summarize key information to keep our waters clean and healthy. We spent much of the summer distributing these resources throughout the community, including dock delivery! We added Facebook to our outreach program and we will be distributing our newsletters via email to those who opt in. And, of course, we continued our efforts to monitor water quality, water temperature, invasive aquatic plants, the annual loon count, and ice in/out data.

At our Annual Meeting in July, we heard your concerns about water levels, threat of invasive plant investigations, and increased boat activity. We have made progress on some of these issues, including a Dam Advisory Committee Meeting and an initial meeting with the Maine Warden Service; updates on both of these efforts are in this newsletter.

As we look ahead to 2025, our plan is to focus on three areas: (1) increase/improve signage at Pleasant Lake and Parker Pond boat ramps/beaches, (2) partner with the Maine Warden Service to educate and assist people in their compliance with conservation laws, and (3) continue our efforts to distribute key information to our community.

If you have questions, ideas for new activities or programs, concerns, or anything else to communicate, please email me at plppassoc@gmail.com.

Happy New Year!

Benaé Francis,
President, Pleasant Lake/
Parker Pond Association



PARTNERING WITH THE MAINE WARDEN SERVICE IN 2025

In September, we met with Lieutenant Jason Luce of the Maine Warden Service in Gray to get an understanding of lake use trends across Maine and to discuss specifically what we are seeing on Pleasant Lake and Parker Pond.



Lieutenant Luce explained that the Game Warden's job has expanded to involve not just law enforcement, but also education and community involvement. Game Wardens serve to educate and assist people in their compliance with conservation laws, and to enforce those laws when individuals choose not to comply.

Pleasant Lake and Parker Pond fall into the Sebago Lake Region of Maine's Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife (IF&W), with the regional office in Gray. With a limited number of Game Wardens in our region, much of their time is spent on the larger lakes, such as Sebago Lake and Long Lake. Lieutenant Luce acknowledged that Pleasant Lake and Parker Pond have not seen much attention in recent years and agreed that we would work to improve that for 2025. We will be following up with Lieutenant Luce in January and putting together a plan for 2025.

YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT

Your support makes it possible for us to continue to do everything we can to keep our lakes healthy and clean for all to enjoy. You can donate:

- By check (Pleasant Lake/ Parker Pond Association, Post Office Box 419, Casco, ME 04015)
- Online (debit, credit or PayPal)
- Or a Qualified Charitable Distribution

Visit here for full details:
<https://plppa.org/contribute/>

Or scan this QR code
to contribute online and
for other contribution options



LAKE WATER LEVELS AND THE PLEASANT LAKE DAM

This year we received many regarding questions whether dam management was responsible for Pleasant Lake's and Parker Pond's low water. Limited rain in June, July, and August 2024 led to a seven inch deficit from the same period in 2023. Ultimately, dam management cannot restore what Mother Nature fails to provide.

The Towns of Casco and Otisfield jointly own the Pleasant Lake Dam, which is west of Route 121 just north of Casco Village and Edes Falls Road. The dam controls the outflow from Parker Pond and Pleasant Lake into Mill Brook, which flows into Crooked River, which flows into Songo River, which flows into Sebago Lake. Enough water must flow into Mill Brook to "keep the mud wet" at minimum, in order to sustain the plant and animal life that relies on the brook. Water passes through the dam via two spillways, into which boards can be inserted and removed as water level dictates, and via a gate at the bottom of the dam that is raised or lowered mechanically. A 1978 order issued by the Maine Soil and Water Conservation Commission requires the water level to be maintained as of June 1 no higher than the 5 foot mark on the gage affixed to the dam's lakeward side. (The gage level of 5 feet equates to 472.2 feet above sea level.) The order requires that no spillway boards be in place from October 15 through April 15. The boards are installed after April 15 to satisfy the Soil and Water Conservation Commission order.

Managing the water level is an art, not a science. Heavy rains that occur when the lake is already high threaten overtopping (water flowing over the top and around the sides of the dam), which undermines its structural integrity. High water negatively impacts cottages located along the north shore of Pleasant Lake. Low water increases the

difficulty of launching and removing watercraft, particularly at the Parker Pond and the Otisfield Pleasant Lake boat launches, increases the hazards of submerged rocks and ledges, and negatively impacts enjoyment of other properties. Through years of trial and error the dam's managers learned that maintaining a level at the gage of 4.5 feet balances competing interests satisfactorily.

Whatever one's stake in the water level debate, do not resort to self-help. Signs, chain-link fences, and a locked gate prohibit unauthorized access to the dam. Nevertheless, trespassing continues. A third board was added to the spillway without authorization. (It is unclear why the perpetrator thought an additional board would retain more water, since the lake was already below the spillway.) Evidently the gage was remounted to raise the 5-foot mark higher than 427.2 feet above sea level. The Dam Advisory Committee, of which the Lake Association is a member, met on October 22 and approved placement of signage that the area is under 24-hour surveillance and of cameras near the dam to capture photos of trespassers.

Going forward, the Dam Manager will maintain logs recording the insertion and removal of spillway boards, weekly water levels, water releases through the gate, and other items of note. The Dam Advisory Committee plans to meet quarterly to review the logs, discuss stakeholder concerns, consult with the Dam Manager, and oversee dam operations. The next meeting will be in early 2025.

We understand concerns about water level. Please be patient until rain, snow, and spring melt replenish the lake. Those responsible for tending the spillway boards and gate releases are doing the best they can.



2024 COURTESY BOAT INSPECTIONS (CBI) RECAP

Courtesy Boat Inspections (CBI) are our first line of defense in preventing invasive species from wreaking havoc in Pleasant Lake and Parker Pond. CBI inspectors are trained to spot and remove fragments of invasive aquatic species on trailer and paddle boats entering and exiting the water, and to answer boaters' questions about invasive plants. They also play a critical role in educating boaters how they can inspect their own watercraft for invasive hitchhikers and the key elements of "CLEAN, DRAIN, DRY", Maine's state law to reduce the spread of aquatic invasive species.

In 2024, we had Courtesy Boat Inspectors for the Parker Pond boat launch (North end of the pond) and both the Casco and Otisfield boat launches for Pleasant Lake. The CBI stations were staffed Saturdays and Sundays from Memorial Day through September.

Great news: Across all our inspections in 2024, there were ZERO fragments found! The absence of plant fragments evidences boater cooperation and the CBI program's success as an educational vehicle.

2024 COURTESY BOAT INSPECTIONS

Pleasant Lake Boat Launches	642
<i>Casco Boat Launch</i>	<i>349</i>
<i>Otisfield Boat Launch</i>	<i>293</i>
Parker Pond Boat Launch	148

Our 2024 Courtesy Boat Inspection program demonstrated why we must cover both the Casco and Otisfield Pleasant Lake ramps. The Otisfield ramp accounted for 46% of 2024's 642 inspections, which was comparable to 2023 when it accounted for 47% of the 569 inspections. Parker Pond had 100 fewer inspections in 2024 than it did in 2023. This year's low lake-water level may explain some of the difference as Parker Pond's ramp access is over soft sand to very shallow water, which may deter some users.

Pictured above left is Jim, our Courtesy Boat Inspector at the Otisfield Boat Launch on Pleasant Lake. Jim loves talking to boaters and teaching them how to inspect boats and equipment for plant fragments, urging boaters to inspect before and after every launch. Thank you Jim — and our other CBI inspectors — for protecting the lake!

We also thank Lakes Environmental Association (LEA) for its guidance in the grant-application process and its day-to-day management of our CBI program which includes hiring, training, overseeing, and administering payroll for inspectors.



TREASURER'S UPDATE

Our 2024 income as of 11/24/2024 was \$25,838.00 and our expenses were \$20,756.49. The expense total reflects almost all of our 2024 expenses. Year-end contributions should boost our 2024 income beyond the total shown.

INCOME (thru Nov 24, 2024)

Maine CBI Grant	\$3,300.00
Contributions—Members	\$11,512.89
Contributions—Towns	\$8,000.00
Interest	\$3,025.11
Total	\$25,838.00

EXPENSES (thru Nov 24, 2024)

Charitable Contributions	\$1,540.65
Legal & Professional Fees	\$540.00
Legal Organization	\$35.00
Website	\$501.31
Postage	\$188.00
CBI Salary	\$17,749.83
Miscellaneous	\$201.70
Total	\$20,756.49

Any surplus (currently around \$5,000) will be transferred to our money market account and become part of "Joel's Fund," our reserve to address threats to the lake's health.

Thanks to the State of Maine, the Town of Casco, the Town of Otisfield, and our many dozens of individual contributors!



2025 LEGISLATIVE UPDATE: VIRTUAL SESSIONS

Hosted by Lake Stewards of Maine (LSM) and Maine Lakes, these sessions will cover upcoming bills affecting lakes and water quality in 2025, ways to get involved, tips for effective testimony, and how to stay informed throughout the legislative session. Susan Gallo of Maine Lakes will be leading the discussion.

- January 15, 2025, at 12:00 PM
- January 16, 2025, at 6:00 PM

To register for either of these sessions, please click the link:
<https://www.lakestewardsofmaine.org/2025-lakes-webinar-series/>



maine public **IN HOT WATER**

In August, Maine Public released an excellent series “In Hot Water”, outlining the risks to lake health from climate change. The four-part audio series covered issues with invasive aquatic species (and costs to prevent spread and remove existing infestations), the challenges of more frequent and intense rainstorms on nutrient loading and algae growth, and what water quality data is telling us about trends and the future of our lake health. Each episode is about 5 minutes.

Part 1: Climate change is overheating Maine’s pristine lakes. Maine is home to almost 6,000 lakes and ponds, with some of the cleanest, clearest water in the country. But many are under threat from climate change.

Part 2: As lakes warm, pollution threats grow deep below the surface. Seasonal water layers are lasting longer, helping feed algal blooms from nutrients buried in lake beds.

Part 3: Maine’s warming lakes incubate damaging invasive plants. Species such as variable leaf milfoil are growing faster and stronger as freshwater temperatures tick up.

Part 4: Climate driven storms add runoff to Maine lakes, degrading water quality. Soil runoff from intense rainstorms can degrade water quality and trigger algal blooms.

To access the 4-part audio series, please visit Maine Public:
<https://www.mainepublic.org/in-hot-water>

2025 PARTNER WEBINARS

After the new year, our friends at Lake Stewards of Maine (LSM) and Maine Lakes will host webinars on various lake related topics. To register for any of these sessions, please click the link:

<https://www.lakestewardsofmaine.org/2025-lakes-webinar-series/>

- **Hidden Gems of Maine’s Waters: Our Unique and Uncommon Fish.** Presented by Merry Gallagher (Maine IF&W), February 20th at 12:00 PM
- **Celebrating 20 Years of LakeSmart!** Presented by Caroline Murray (Maine Lakes), April 10th at 6:00 PM
- **Our Shore: Living Shorelines and Nature-based Solutions for Erosion Control.** Presented by Nate Robbins (DEP), May 8th at 12:00 PM