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Fall 2024 Pleasant Pond/Cobossee Stream Lake Association Newsletter

1 message

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Pleasant Pond/Cobossee Stream Lake Association Fall 2024 Newsletter

Dear Association Friends,

It has been a lovely fall on Pleasant Pond and Cobossee Stream: I'm sure we are all thankful to live in such a beautiful place. In this newsletter we want to give you some important information that will have an impact on Pleasant Pond and Cobossee Stream, as well as some general information about happenings on the water.

CRITICAL RESTRUCTURING OF *FRIENDS OF THE COBOSSEE WATERSHED (FOCW)* AND THE IMPACT ON OUR LAKE ASSOCIATION

Below is an excerpt from an October 17, 2024, letter from FOCW to its members and donors:

Current Situation Recent developments have compelled us to undertake a complete restructuring of our organization. As of today, the Friends, as we have known it for the past 20 years, is no longer fully operational.

The need for restructuring arises from longstanding financial challenges rooted in a business model that has become unsustainable over the years. In simple terms, the costs associated with operating our Conservation programs, Education initiatives, and Slow-the-Flow projects have exceeded our capacity to raise sufficient funds.

As a result, and with the goal of serving the watershed's most critical needs, we will focus our efforts solely on Conservation (and have ended our Education and Slow-the-Flow programs). Given the presence of Invasive Aquatic Species (IAS) in the watershed and the immediate threat they present to all of our lakes and ponds, we know it is critical that we continue our successful Conservation programs across these three areas:

1. Prevention (Inspecting for IAS via Courtesy Boat Inspections)
2. Detection (Surveying for IAS)
3. Mitigation (Removing IAS)

A Path Forward: A Watershed-Wide Approach To ensure sustainable funding of this important work, we are shifting to a more collaborative model that looks to all of the independent lake associations to share in the support of watershed conservation work, as well as fund infestation management as needed on their own waters. By pooling our resources and expertise across all of our lakes and ponds, we can most efficiently ensure the health of our watershed.

What this means is that Pleasant Pond/Cobossee Stream property owners will no longer have milfoil removal paid for by other lake associations. Pleasant Pond, Horseshoe Pond, and Cobossee Stream account for more than 30% of the Variable Leaf Milfoil (VLM) infestations in the entire 28 water bodies of the Cobossee Watershed. For the past 20 years, VLM removal from our pond and stream has been paid for in large part by private donations to FOCW from residents of other lakes. Frankly, we have gotten a free ride thanks to the generosity of people who don't live on our waters. This has not been fair to them, and with the financial restructuring of FOCW, this arrangement is coming to an end.

There are three stages to invasive plant removal. Phase 1 is Prevention via Courtesy Boat Inspections (CBI) by summer employees at the boat launches on the pond. Phase 2 is Detection, which is done by annual surveys of the pond and stream by professional and trained volunteers. They make in-person inspections of our pond and stream shoreline to locate and map infestations. Phase 3 is Mitigation by removing the plants. This is done most effectively by Diver Assisted Suction Harvesting or DASH. A New Hampshire company called New England Milfoil (NEM) has been the most successful and cost-effective outfit for this.

The cost for NEM (two professional divers and one boat operator) to remove milfoil is \$6,000 per week. An annual season of milfoil removal on Pleasant Pond, Horseshoe Pond, and Cobossee Stream is 3 to 4 weeks, for a total maximum cost of \$24,000; the cost of boat inspections at the launch ramps is about \$2,000; and surveys require about \$8,000. Thus, the total annual cost for our association waters totals about \$34,000.

Some of this cost is borne by the towns that border Pleasant Pond and Cobossee Stream. Their combined contribution this year to FOCW is \$20,000. In addition, the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) contributes to FOCW generously, and FOCW is currently working with DEP to determine the appropriate allocation to plant survey and removal on our corner of the watershed.

As you can see, milfoil prevention, detection, and mitigation is expensive. But the alternative is to let the plant grow unchecked, which in a few years would cause the total destruction of our water. Milfoil infestations choke a pond (see below), making swimming, boating, and fishing nearly impossible, to say nothing of the severe ecological impact. Further, we property owners would face a severe loss of property value, and in turn, over time, the reduced property tax income would seriously impact the four towns' municipal budgets.



That's the bad news. The **good news** is that regular efforts to control milfoil are very effective, as recent history shows. Further, some 350 Pleasant Pond/Cobossee Stream property owners, 4 municipalities, and the DEP are all stakeholders, and we can work together to share this financial burden.

Stay tuned for forthcoming information about how individuals can contribute directly to next season's milfoil prevention, detection, and removal. In the meantime, please spread the word to waterfront neighbors about this change at FOCW and the need for involvement and engagement. For more information, please contact FOCW directly at www.watershedfriends.com or mail@watershedfriends.com.

OTHER NEWS

Drawdown. The annual drawdown has begun and will continue till about November 15, when the pond will be 2 feet below summer level. This lowering is to create capacity for spring runoff and rain and also to prevent shoreline scouring by pond ice.

Water Quality Report: There was a marked difference in water clarity between the Upper and Lower Ponds this summer. Both water bodies started the season with good clarity, but by midsummer the Lower Pond (the larger basin) started experiencing a severe algae bloom that has continued into October. The Upper Pond had only a slight bloom in August but then quickly clarified to visibility of 12 feet. The Cobossee Watershed District (CWD) doubled their water quality monitoring to increase information on phosphorus concentrations in the pond and will be evaluating the data this winter as well as ideas for managing the problem. In the meantime, there are many things that property owners can do. Wendy Dennis, CWD Lake Scientist, has provided the attached list of actions you can take to help reduce the nutrients and pollutants entering the pond and feeding the algae. We all need to take seriously our stewardship of this precious resource. Please read and remember these "do's and don'ts."

New Mills Dam Update: In early October, the New Mills Dam at the outlet of the pond and stream had an inspection and routine maintenance performed by Commercial Divers of Bangor. More maintenance is scheduled for late next summer but will have no impact on pond water levels. According to the inspector, the dam is in sound condition, always good to hear. The dam is owned by the three communities of Richmond, Litchfield, and Gardiner, and administered by a committee of volunteers, many of whom belong to our lake association. Costs for repairs and maintenance are borne by the three municipal owners.

Volunteers Making a Difference. We want to thank a number of our pond association members for their service in various ways. Ed and Cheryl Avis, Pat Sirois, Kathy Daniel, Mark Fish, A.J. Ballard, and I (Jack Daniel) comprise the Steering Committee for the PPCSLA. Greg Anderson and Mark Fish are both board members of the Cobbossee Watershed District and also do the water clarity monitoring on the pond every other week during the season. Matt Tarbox, Kelly Holmes, David Smith, Dana Holmes, Mark Fish, Jack Daniel, Greg Anderson, and Pat Sirois are all members of the New Mills Dam Committee. And finally, Mark Fish is administrator of our private group Facebook page, which we urge you to join (Pleasant Pond/Cobbossee Stream Lake Association). We are grateful for their service in helping protect and improve the quality of our beloved water body.