



Newsletter

Spring 2020

From your President: Snow, rain, wind, power outages, falling trees, high water, and Covid-19 - What a spring! As we change our ways adapting to social distancing, we are all challenged with learning the ropes of 'Zoom'. As a board we have been taking care of business via Zoom meetings. We have also been considering the Annual Meeting in July. Currently, we are discussing the options, but planning to do the business meeting virtually. We will keep you posted but please save the date, July 14th at 4:30 PM.

As you all know the Megunticook Watershed Association, is a nonprofit, which is trying to make our community more aware of our precious resource. We would like to encourage you to help in this effort by renewing or becoming a member of MWA. In 2019 our memberships were down and we encourage you, as well as your friends, to support this worthy cause. We depend on membership fees to fund the majority of our programs including: testing water bacteria levels weekly from June to October, checking boats for invasive plants, and educating the public about threats to the Watershed and what they can do to protect it. Our Watershed Stewards program trains area students about water quality problems and trains them to combat these threats. Salaries for our Lake Warden and Executive Director are paid from your membership dues. Our Lake Warden places and removes the navigation markers, does property checks during storms, and patrols the watershed by boat, snowmobile, and foot. Our Executive Director stays up to date on watershed issues statewide by attending conferences and networking with other watershed associations in the state. He educates the public on the history of the watershed, its ecology, and how to protect our precious resource. Also, within the coming year, we will also need to conduct a capital campaign to fund the purchase of a new MWA patrol boat.

Another request is that we are in need of interested members to step forward to be on the MWA Board. I know we are all busy -but without volunteers to assist on the board the fate of the Association will be in jeopardy. This year we are in need of a President, Vice President and Secretary - Please email or call any board member if you are interested.

With our social distancing I know we all enjoy the beauty and peace of the Watershed. Remember 'this too shall pass' be kind, be positive, and be respectful of each other

Keep smiling and hope to see you on the water this summer. *Dody Urquia Email urquiad@aol.com*

Treasurer's Report: Winter seems to want to hold on this year as many of us saw snow showers and winter temps over Mothers Day weekend, despite that, there are small signs of spring starting to show around the watershed.

Thanks to an increase in contributions we ended this year within our predicted budget, however the year ended with a deficit of approximately \$2,150. This deficit seems to be a combination of things, from slight decrease in memberships, to a drop in our Vanguard investment due to the COVID19 pandemic. Although we remained within budget for the year, we did not have enough contributions and memberships to offset the full deficit that we had predicted with the 2019/2020 budget.

Membership dues and contributions are what sustain the Watershed Association, without everyone's support we would be unable to do the testing, education, patrol and various other activities that protect this resource for generations to come. I hope everyone has a great summer and gets a chance to get out and enjoy the Watershed. Thank you for your continued support of Megunticook Watershed Association. Stay Safe and Healthy! *Sarah Marriner, Treasurer smarriner80@gmail.com*

Exec. Director Report: Interesting times indeed! The pandemic has certainly changed how we conduct ourselves. Trying to continue our mission of protecting and conserving the Watershed has meant re-examining our programs in the light of pandemic precautions. Here is a brief update on some things going on in the Watershed; and some of our programs.

Annual Meeting– Scheduled for July 14th, 4:30 PM. This will be a virtual Zoom business meeting. No speaker or program is anticipated. Stay tuned for details and the invite.

Dam Repairs– The Town of Camden approved the money and a contractor was lined up to repair the West Dam this spring. The repairs are currently on hold. The contractor is from Rhode Island and, with quarantine rules, won't travel to Maine. I expect the repairs to be done sometime in the fall. The West Dam is currently operating as it should and will continue to do so. The repairs are scheduled maintenance to switch out old equipment and the main water gate.

Water Levels– From dams to water levels. A mid April snowstorm and a subsequent 2+ inch rain-storm quickly brought the lake and pond water levels to almost 2 feet above the dam spillway. There was some minor flooding around the Watershed and the falls at Camden Harbor were quite a sight. Currently the water level is back down to at, or near, the spillway, where we hope it will stay through the Loon nesting season. *Continued on Page 3*

IMPORTANT!!!
Do we have your current e-mail address, mailing address and phone number?

Forward all information to Paul Leeper: paul@megunticook.org or 207-592-8540. Thanks!

We need current e-mail addresses, mailing addresses, and phone numbers for all members. We have a number of old addresses, e-mails, and phone numbers. Emergency notices and seasonal updates are sent by e-mail making the importance of having them current, crucial. MWA does not sell or share its e-mail or mailing lists.

Interested in Volunteering? Your MWA can use your help!

Help us protect the water quality in the Watershed. The MWA is looking for volunteers for two of our programs in 2020. We need volunteers to help us take weekly water samples to test for harmful bacteria as part of our **Partners in Monitoring** program. Want to help prevent the spread of invasive plant species? Join our **Courtesy Boat Inspection** Program and inspect boats and trailers at the boat ramps. If you are interested please contact Paul Leeper at paul@megunticook.org.

<p>MWA Officers President - Dody Urquia 207-624-1718; urquiad@aol.com Vice President - Hillary Jackson 207-975-5060; hillaryhope1@yahoo.com Secretary - Wendy Wickenden 207-236-3745; wendyllynnwick@gmail.com Treasurer– Sarah Marriner 207-596-9008; smarriner80@gmail.com</p>	<p>Interested in serving on the MWA Board of Directors, or helping out on a committee? please contact Paul Leeper or one of the Board officers. paul@megunticook.org</p>
<p>MWA Staff Exec. Director - Paul Leeper 207-592-8540; paul@megunticook.org Lake Warden –Dale Dougherty 207-390-0030; lakewardens@megunticook.org Asst. Lake Warden– Justin Twitchell 207-975-1721; jtwitchell@knoxcountymaine.gov</p>	<p>Check us out at www.megunticook.org and on Facebook and Instagram</p> <p>Please don't forget your dues! There is a yellow dues card and envelope included with this newsletter, it is for your 2020-2021 dues. Please send in your membership check today. If you are not a member please consider joining and/or making a donation at this time. We need everyone's continued support!</p>

Exec. Director Report Continued:

Student Watershed Stewards Program– Typically I speak with the high school environmental science classes and introduce the students to the program. I then hire interested, motivated young people and train them about water quality threats and how to combat these threats. These students learn to identify invasive plants and animals, staff the boat ramps inspecting boats for invasives, and collect bi-weekly water quality data in both the lake and pond. This year, with the schools closed, it wasn't possible to recruit a new crop of Stewards. In addition, I didn't feel comfortable training new people for the job AND physical distancing from complete strangers at the boat ramps. My plan is to hire some of the students, mostly in college now, who have already been through the program and use the guidance from Maine CDC and Dept. of Env. Protection regarding interactions with the public.

Water Quality Testing– This program, run in conjunction with the Stewards program, will continue this summer. However, testing will probably be done by one or two people at a time.

Partners in Monitoring– This is our weekly water bacteria testing program. Each week, volunteers test 7 sites including the swim beaches on the lake, pond, and river for bacteria. The results are posted on our website and relayed to the town. This program is slated to begin in June although we will need to institute new procedures for transferring the samples to the lab.

LakeSmart Program- We are assessing the situation and discussing possible procedures with Maine Lake Society, the LakeSmart parent organization.

Finally, I would just like to say, getting outdoors or on the water can be done without endangering yourself, or others. So, see you on the water! Just from 6 feet away.

Exec. Dir. Paul Leeper Tel. 207-592-8540 Email: paul@megunticook.org

Lake Warden's Report: Hello to all, hopefully you are all safe and well. This has been a strange spring with Covid 19 and snow in May. The wind has been blowing so hard and the temps down that I've found it hard to get out fishing this spring. Better days hopefully will come. I've seen a few mayflies go fullering by on a few warmer afternoons, but no rising fish. They may be rising but the wind and waves hide the action.

A family of beavers are hard at work on Wiley brook. The first dam upstream from the lake was flooded this spring and I was able to get over it and up to second dam. This one has a massive beaver house and large clearing. This area looks like a construction area with work in progress. The trees have been cleared from the shore of the beaver pond and the beavers have come close to flooding the road that passes nearby. Another young beaver tried to dam Norton Pond at Bailey Bridge but the high-water level flooded the small house and washed away the uncompleted dam.

The Brown Tail Moth (BTM) season is quickly approaching. You can see the overwintering nests in the treetops all around the lake. They will be feasting on the new leaf growth at the tops of trees. After they will eat all the leaves on the host tree and they will leave that tree looking for more food. Many camp owners have had their trees cleaned of nests by an arborist to hopefully remove the problem. I've heard of and seen many different methods to get rid of the BTM on your property. They range from removal of the tree, insecticide injections, to greasing the tree trunk so the caterpillars get stuck in the grease. Then you have a tree covered with dead greasy caterpillars to clean up. Yuck!

The water temps of the lake are struggling to get to the 50's. It's easy to forget when the air warms up that the water is still very cold. Try putting your hands in the lake for a few minutes! Hooking up a float last week I needed to reach underwater to secure it. When done, my hands ached for a long time. Remember to stay safe and wear your PFD. Tell someone where you're going and when you'll be back. And please do social distancing at the boat ramps and picnic areas.

Lake Warden Dale Dougherty, Tel. 207-390-0030 E-mail: lakewarden@megunticook.org

Behold the mighty oak.

Symbol of strength, longevity, permanence, even immortality, the red oak is a common if not dominant tree in some Maine forests. It rings the watershed in many places. A long-lived (up to 400 years even) provider of acorns for wildlife (and even for humans in times of need), and wood for building things like furniture and flooring, ships, and even lobster traps, to name a few items. The most common oak species in Maine is the red oak (*Quercus rubra*), it can be recognized by the reddish tinge to the fissures in the bark. It is a giving tree if there ever was one. As such, is it ever important to the ecosystems of Maine.



Within the last 10-15 years, research has shown that oaks are among the most important native trees in the numbers of species of lepidopteran larvae, or caterpillars, it supports. Now wait! Don't hang up! I will get to brown tailed moths in a bit. Dr. Douglas Tallamy's book, *Bringing Nature Home*, details the astonishing number - 431 in our area - of different kinds of caterpillars that feed on oak leaves. We never see them unless we are entomologists; we never even know they are there because they don't do much damage to the leaves. But the birds that call the forest home for the summer and raise their nestlings sure know they are there! Dr. Tallamy's research revealed that it takes 6,000 to 9,000 caterpillars to raise a nest of chickadee babies! And chickadees are only one species of bird in the woods. Oaks support almost all the woodland, and garden for that matter, birds in Maine - warblers, vireos, thrushes. You name it. They need the caterpillars. And other wildlife eats the acorns: Deer, bear, wild turkey, squirrels, chipmunks. Deer and moose can eat the foliage although red oak leaves have a lot of tannin so they would not be first on the list. Bottom line is they are extremely important trees.

Alas, red oak are also a favorite of brown tailed moths. I watched the oaks on Carl's Point on the lake become denuded last summer. Then the oaks put out a second set of leaves. These leaves then turned coppery starting in late summer. I interpreted that to mean the tender second growth burned in the hot sun and not much rain, but no, actually they were eaten by the tiny larvae before they made their winter nests. It's a hand-wringing situation. Last summer the fungus that kills caterpillars seemed to get a good foothold in the Camden area. May the conditions permit even a greater effect this year.

Until the cycle of the BTMs is broken by this fungus, the forest trees will suffer. On people's properties, there are choices, none of them good. Cut down a tree that provides shade, sustenance for wildlife, adds value to the property? Or spray or inject the tree that will kill not only the BTMs but every other caterpillar and insect? Injection will even turn the tree into a toxic repository for the chemical for up to a year so it will eliminate food for all those garden birds. Birds are in enough trouble as it is. There should be much thought before deciding upon these dire treatments.

There is a proverb that reads as follows: "A society grows great when old men plant trees whose shade they know they shall never sit in."

In 2017 there was a tremendous acorn crop (last fall as well) and in the spring, I noticed one had sprouted in a pot that had a small plant I was growing. I planted it at our lake cottage, (remember the song, Honey? It was not even a twig). I even gave it a name: Gabriel, after Gabriel Oakes, the hard-working, stalwart, steadfast farmer in Thomas Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd*. I will not sit in the shade of that tree but I hope someone will, and it gives me hope that it will feed many birds and other wildlife for many, many years into the future.

For more information look up Dr. Douglas Tallamy; *Maine Audubon Bringing Nature Home*; also <https://www.nwf.org/NativePlantFinder/Plants/2804>; <http://www.bringingnaturehome.net>; https://www.maine.gov/dacf/mfs/publications/handbooks_guides/forest_trees/pdf/Oaks.pdf Amy Campbell