

MINUTES OF THE WEST HARBOR POND WATERSHED ASSOCIATION'S ANNUAL MEETING: AUGUST 13, 2023

Merritt Blakeslee, the Chair of the WHPWA Board of Directors, promptly at 1PM, welcomed the 20+ people who attended the meeting.

He acknowledged and thanked Nate Cagle for heading the committee that organized this meeting and to the members of his committee who helped set up.

I. HOUSEKEEPING

Valerie Breen gave a brief Treasurer's report which was also handed out on paper at the registration table for all to keep. A COPY IS ATTACHED.

Secretary Judy Kildow gave a membership report indicating the number of members who paid last year. She urged everyone to remind their neighbors to sign up to create broader community support for maintaining our healthy pond.

A. Elections

As people signed in and paid their dues at the registration table, they were also asked to vote on 3 items: 1) extending Nate Cagle's term on the BoD, 2) electing Valerie Breen as a new BoD member, and 3) approving an amendment to the WHPWA By-Laws providing guidelines on budget expenditures.

Results of the election. Nate reelected, Valerie elected, by-laws amendment adopted.

B. The Board of Directors

Merritt encouraged those present to consider becoming a member of the BoD, which runs the Association. The bylaws provide for 3 to 11 members and we presently have 9. We would welcome two more.

The BoD meets quarterly and more often if necessary. Its meetings are open to all members and are publicized in advance via email and on our website. At present, our meetings are part in-person, part Zoom. Just let us know if you would like to attend when you receive notice of a meeting.

Merritt introduced the BoD members present and asked them each to stand up and be recognized.

Will Anderson, (who is the webmaster of our excellent and now regularly updated website, which is our chief means of communication with you.)

Jill Whitehead Bryant,

Nate Cagle,

Maggie Fairbrother,

Judy Kildow (secretary),

David McFarland,

Mike Breen, and

Valerie Breen, (our treasurer and newest member.)

Without the Board, the Association could not function. Many of the volunteer tasks are carried out by the board, and he thanked them for their service.

C. Newcomers

Five newcomers were introduced and welcomed: Erik Kersting., Meredith and John Androsavich, Katie and Doug Lail.

D. Ron Reinhard's retirement from the BoD

While Ron was unable to attend, Merritt gave the following tribute:

The Association was founded in 2009. Ron joined the Board the following year and served continuously as a director until the beginning of the year, when, after 13 years, he stepped down. He is by far the longest serving member of the Board. Ron has worn many hats during his time with the WHPWA. To mention just a few, he has been key to our water sampling program, collecting both Secchi readings and water column readings. And he has headed up our LakeSmart program since we began participating in it. We thank him for all that he has done for the association during his time on the Board.

II. PRESIDENT'S REPORT (AND Q&A)

A. ONGOING INITIATIVES:

1. Water testing

Perhaps the most important activity carried out by our association is water quality testing. We do two main types:

a) Secchi Disk Monitoring for Water Clarity

Secchi disk testing to monitor clarity is an important indicator of water quality. Ron and Leslie Volpe take Secchi disk readings twice a month between May and October report the results to the Lake Stewards of Maine.

b) Water column testing

David, Nate, Mike, and Merritt take measurements of the water column monthly, recording temperature, dissolved oxygen, and salinity, and we sample for ortho-phosphates. This is year-round testing, conducted 12 months a year, ice conditions permitting.

2. LakeSmart initiative

A danger to the Pond, and, hence, to those of us who live on it, is water pollution from shoreside runoff (erosion), which carries phosphates into the Pond.

LakeSmart is a program developed by the Maine Lakes Society to educate owners of waterfront property about the dangers of runoff, to provide assistance in remediating runoff, and to recognize waterfront property owners who have successfully dealt with runoff problems on their property.

Ron has stepped down from being in charge of our LakeSmart program and we are looking for a replacement.

If you would like a formal or informal evaluation of the erosion issues on your shoreside property or if you would like to be trained as a LakeSmart evaluator, Merritt is receiving inquiries.

3. Operation of the siphon

Last year, a year of severe drought, we turned the siphon off to avoid contributing to lowering the level of the pond. And we developed a policy for deciding when to turn the siphon off and back on, balancing the three competing interests relevant to the operation of the siphon:

- Evacuating saltwater from the Pond after king tides;
- Maintaining a flow of water through the fishway, particularly in the spring and fall; and
- Keeping the Pond from dropping too low, which is a particular concern during periods of drought, or rising too high (although no complaints about high water for some time).

None of the above has been necessary this year, and the siphon has been running continuously since last December.

B. NEW DEVELOPMENTS

1. Our loons

A gratifying development is the fact that, for the second time in many years, a pair of loons has produced a baby loon on the Pond.

Please remember the basic cautions about loons. Because loons must build their nests close to the water's edge, these nests are highly vulnerable. Please stay away from their nest and please maintain a 200' no wake zone when passing a nest.

And loons are at risk of lead poisoning. Please don't use lead fishing gear.

People were told to consult the loon information at the check-in table.

2. Pond Grass

Early this summer, the north end of the pond was suddenly filled with narrow-leaf pond grass, interfering with kayaking, swimming, and fishing. The bloom was triggered by the nutrients carried down Campbell Creek by this spring and summer's unusually heavy rains. A number of residents raised concerns, so we consulted with Bigelow Labs, who explained

- 1) That the grass was a native species, not an invasive species; and that
- 2) It is absorbing the nutrients, which otherwise could contribute to algae blooms including toxic cyanobacteria blooms.

Since then, the pond grass has receded significantly, there have been no algae blooms, and the upper pond has healthy levels of oxygenation.

3. Relations with CMP

a. Osprey nest

Last December, Central Maine Power decided to remove the osprey nest on the power pole on the causeway. We worked with CMP, which, instead of destroying the nest, placed an extension and a handsome nest box on the power pole, safeguarding both the ospreys' home, which they are presently enjoying, and the transmission lines.

b. Trimming operations on Lakeside Drive

This spring, CMP began extensive trimming operations on the lower peninsula. The impact on Lakeside Drive was particularly heavy – deep ruts in the right-of-way and uncollected slash and wood chips. Again, we were able to work with CMP to mitigate the impact of their operation and to reach agreement on new, less destructive protocols for the future.

4. Closer relationship with Bigelow

One of the most important developments of the past year is our closer relationship with Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences. This is the work of Judy Kildow, who is a member both of our Board of Directors and of Bigelow's board of Trustees.

On Friday, a number of us had an extended Zoom call with Rachel Sipler and Peter Countway, Senior Scientists who are Bigelow's freshwater specialists. We discussed developing and finding the funding for joint WHPWA-Bigelow projects of benefit to the Pond. We will have a meeting in October to continue this discussion.

The three highlights of the call were:

E coli testing: Bigelow is just beginning a project to test for human and animal fecal contamination. For a modest fee, they are willing to process samples that we collect. This would help us identify problem septic systems, monitor any animal contamination, particularly goose contamination, and provide appropriate advice to members about whether it is safe to swim.

Nutrient testing: Bigelow is willing to test WHPWA-collected samples for nutrient levels at low cost. If we collect nutrient data systematically, it will be useful in the future for understanding phenomena like this year's pond grass bloom.

Finally, Dr. Sipler remarked that, ironically, it may be a challenge to find grant money for projects associated with the pond precisely because, in her words, “West Harbor Pond is really healthy.” “It is holding up really well.” “The natural processes were able to mitigate the unusual climate event” that resulted in the pond grass bloom.

Bigelow has asked that if you have any concerns about developments with the Pond’s environment, you bring them directly to Merritt or Judy Kildow, and they will, as appropriate, reach out to Bigelow for further assistance.

5. The Great West Harbor Pond Fishing Derby of 2023, July session

Two sessions are being held this summer, July and August. Not only can you win a hat but you can have your picture of you and your prize-winning fish posted on the WHP website. Please participate in the August session.

For July, the winners who tied for first place are two grandchildren of Tom Staebler, who owns one of the condos and whom many of you know:

1. Graham Staebler from Westerville Ohio. Age 12 Largemouth Bass 13” long. Caught on a plastic worm.
2. Abby Chordas from Westerville Ohio. She is 13 and caught this Largemouth Bass 13” long.

Tom writes:

Our son Mike, Graham’s father, is quite the fisherman also and fishes in tournaments regularly. He commented that the size and quantity of the fish in West Harbor Pond were noticeably better since the siphon was repaired.

Merritt mailed their prizes to them in Ohio.

6. Unfinished business; volunteers needed

We welcome volunteers to help out with these and other projects.

We would love to fill the two open slots on the Board of Directors.

Merritt closed his talk by asking the audience to express any concerns about the pond, and/or if they had further suggestions for what else they would like to have us do.

The business meeting was followed by a delicious potluck lunch and more socializing.

