

**Three Lakes Council
Annual Meeting Minutes
July 30, 2020**

President Janet Andersen opened the Three Lakes Council's 2020 Annual Meeting at 7:30 pm and noted that it is the 50th Anniversary of the Three Lakes Council. Unfortunately, because of the Covid 19 pandemic, this year's Annual Meeting had to be held virtually via Zoom instead of at the usual delightful Waccabuc Country Club facilities. Jan thanked Doug Housman for setting up the Zoom meeting and serving as co-host. Approximately 50 residents of the Three Lakes attended the meeting.

Jan welcomed all and thanked everyone for attending to talk about our lakes, what the Council has been doing over the past year, and what we're planning to do for the rest of 2020. She thanked Katie McGinn for preparing the slides that were displayed during the presentation.

Election of at-large Board members

Jan thanked the members of the Board and Executive Committee for their continuing efforts and insight. "It is through this team that most of our work is accomplished. Board members are appointed by each association around the lakes and are your voice on the council." The officers and directors are:

Executive Committee:

President – Janet Andersen
Vice President – Peter Gross
Treasurer – Katie McGinn
Secretary – Jean Lewis

Board of Directors

Lake Oscaleta Association – Kevin Karl
Lake Waccabuc Association – Doug Housman and John Lemke
Lakeside Association – Ron Tetelman
Perch Bay Association – Ellen Bailey
South Shore Association – Jonathan Peter and Tim Kennedy
Two Lake Club – Peter Gross
Waccabuc Landowners Council – Randy Gladding
Waccabuc Country Club – Darrell Alfieri
Lake Preservation Committee Chair – Paul Lewis

The board nominated and recommended re-election of our current at-large directors, Fred Cowles and Jean Lewis. Those present voted unanimously to approve their appointments.

Jan started with the mission and reported on the Three Lakes Council's activities season by season. The Three Lake Council's goal is to protect and preserve the waters of our three lakes using science-based approaches. We focus on actions that affect the watershed, because the waters in our lakes truly reflect what happens in the watershed.

Fall & Winter

- In October of 2019, our lake manager Michael Martin, presented our **Lake Management Plan** at a public meeting. The plan identified an urgent recommendation for our lakes: in order to limit the growth of plants and algae, we need to reduce the levels of phosphorus. The current levels of phosphorus are well above the NY Department of Environmental Conservation's standards.

- We continue to monitor whether the NY State DEC (Department of Environmental Conservation) will permit some of the potential options that were identified in the plan.
- Meanwhile, we are actively seeking funding from the East of Hudson (EOH) division of the NYC Department of Environmental Protection to put filters in some of the catch basins around the lakes to trap phosphorus. Paul Lewis and Jan met with the EOH representative and discussed possible options. This effort has been slowed by the pandemic.
- Behind the scenes, the board reviewed actions of the prior year and reviewed top issues. We also filed tax reports, established the budget, considered revenue projections, prioritized initiatives, and decided on actions to take in the coming year.
- We refreshed our **website** with current information about lake conditions. Our website is a good first place to look for information about the lakes.
- We sent out **informational emails** on our [Three Lake Council Google group](#). Anyone not on the 3LC Google group who wishes to receive 3LC emails can contact Jan to sign up.
- We are also on [Facebook](#) where you can like us to see the information we post there.
- Our successful **year-end fundraising** allows us to undertake many of our activities. Jan thanked every contributor for their generosity and support.

Spring was unique this year because of the pandemic and the need for the Board to meet virtually.

- **Goose population stabilization:** The droppings of Canada Geese add a significant amount of phosphorus to our lakes. In April we had our 14th year of oiling their eggs to prevent them from hatching, and this has significantly reduced the resident goose population. Thanks to Peter and Lyn Beardsley and J Durst who braved the spring weather and the squawking geese to oil 36 eggs in 8 nests.
- In May we kicked off our annual **membership drive**. To date we have about 180 members. In addition to funding our actions, membership amplifies our voice with the town and state when we comment on proposed regulations. This year, with no potluck because of the pandemic, we rely on appeals more than ever. Membership is just \$55 and we are so grateful to the many people who donate more. So far this year our average donation is \$140, thanks to our very generous donors. This is slightly below our usual average of around \$155 per donor.
- **Newsletter:** We mailed our [award winning](#) annual Newsletter to 435 residents in June, and we distributed more via the Waccabuc Country Club. If you didn't get one, make sure we have your mailing address. Since we have had more visitors to our lakes this year, we encourage you to share the Good Neighbor Guidelines on page 3 of the newsletter with guests and renters.
- **Beaver debris:** Starting in the spring, rotating groups of volunteers check the Oscaleta-Waccabuc culvert each weekend to clear beaver debris. We recognize that the channels help make our lakes special and we want to enable passage, so this spring the Council allocated funds to have some of the beaver's winter food cache removed.
- **Long Pond Preserve** had a lot more activity this spring. Early in the season it became clear that people were not social distancing. Visitors were violating the rules of the pandemic and also violating the rules of the Preserve. The Board discussed a variety of options, and John Lemke consulted with the police who advised us to close the Preserve. The Board made the difficult decision to do so, and we thank John for being the interface with the police department. We are all motivated to minimize the spread of COVID-19 at our Preserve. We appreciate the support the Town has given us by temporarily closing the parking area and extending the no-parking area on Mead Street. Although the Preserve is closed, Kevin Karl built new bog bridges over some wet areas along the trail. This will reduce phosphorus-laden erosion once we can reopen the Preserve. He has also managed to keep the invasive phragmites in check – it hasn't gone

to seed once since he's been in charge. We are so grateful that Kevin has continued and expanded his role in maintaining the trails on the Preserve.

I also want to thank everyone, and notably Bob Reynolds and Judy Hausman, who have picked up the trash left by our less considerate visitors.

We have now owned the preserve for just over 4 years and it is continuing to take more time, energy, and funds than we had anticipated, but we continue to feel we made the right decision to acquire the preserve.

Summer

- **Aquatic plant surveys:** This year's plant survey occurred on July 28 & 29 on Oscaleta and Rippowam. We are delighted no new invasive plants were found. We alternate annual surveys of these two lakes with the survey of Waccabuc to keep costs down. One reason we survey is to look for invasive plants. We hope we don't find any, but if they are out there we want to find them early enough to take action. In 2008, we caught Brazilian elodea in Waccabuc while it was still in one cove and, as you know, BEEP was successful at getting rid of this highly invasive plant. We really don't want to have to go through that again. The other reason we do surveys is because aquatic plants interfere with lake use, and we can assess trends in both submersed and floating plants around our lakes. Plants grow more densely because of phosphorus and are another reflection of the phosphorus trends. Note that these studies are a snapshot, taken at one point in the summer, and don't reflect the fact that the weeds seem to start earlier in the spring and stay later into the fall.
Please send me an email or a photo if you think you see a strange plant. Don't worry about false alarms, that's what I hope for every time! Keep those alerts coming.
- **Lake water testing:** We continue water quality sampling & testing on Lakes Waccabuc, Oscaleta and Rippowam as part of a NYS DEC program. As in past years, I've sent a report after every monitoring session, focused on the clarity of the lakes. These reports are not coming regularly every weekend now since we are linking our sampling dates with fly-overs of two specific satellites. Scientists hope to be able to use the satellite imagery to identify algal blooms, and our physical data can provide reference data to the imagery. We looked at the satellite images of Lake Waccabuc during a past bloom, and the change is evident. Of course, we test more than clarity and we send samples off to the labs, including shallow and deep phosphorus. We also measure temperature, color, dissolved oxygen, nitrogen, chlorophyll, pH, conductivity, chloride, and calcium in our lakes. In 2019 we sampled 13 times starting in April and ending around Thanksgiving. Reports for each of our lakes for 2019 are on our website. We've done 4 sessions on each lake so far this season. Our research helps us understand the normal variability for our lakes, and should alert us quickly if we go further off track.
- **Algal blooms:** We continue our sampling for harmful algal blooms, which warmer weather will make worse. We regularly sample our lakes for blue green algae whether we see any sign of a bloom or not, and we can send in special samples if we see discolored water. We've sent in two algal samples from Waccabuc so far this year. So far no toxins have been found. If high concentrations of blue-green algae are present, the lab will test for toxins. Not all blue green algae blooms produce toxins, but some do. Last year, we didn't see any blooms, but we did in 2018. I appreciate receiving photos of suspected algal blooms, so keep them coming! We also keep track of rainfall and lake levels so that someday we might be able to relate that to algal conditions. Thanks to Bobbie Terman who helps me track lake levels.
- **Boat stickers:** Our boat sticker initiative is going strong. We have issued almost 800 of the new turtle boat stickers. They help us keep transient boats and potential invasive

plants and animals off our lakes, and they help us reunite lost owners with their boats. Go to www.threelakescouncil.org/boats to get your sticker.

- **Grant potential:** We got some very good news a couple of weeks ago. Lake Waccabuc is one of three lakes in Lewisboro (the others are Truesdale and Kitchawan) that were approved for a grant for an engineering study to assess needs for wastewater systems and identify potential solutions. The obvious situation on Waccabuc is the South Shore area, but other areas around Waccabuc will be studied for candidates as well. The next steps are for the Town to sign the agreement by the end of August, and issue bids for the work by the end of September. This is one step in a long process, but it's a very important step. You can bet I'll be working with the Town to make the dates.

Financial Report: We are in good financial shape, but recent trends are not what we'd like to see. In both 2018 and 2019, we spent more than we took in. While our income is usually about \$35,000 each year, in 2019 it dropped to \$32,163. In 2018, we spent \$1,165 more than our income, and in 2019, we spent \$9,413 more than we raised. This is why we have some rainy day money set aside, but it's a concern longer term. We had started the year with some hopes for aggressive fundraising. So far in 2020, we have raised about \$25,000 from about 180 members. We cut back some of our spending plans this year in recognition that members might be impacted by coronavirus economics and be unable to support us to their normal extent. We will prioritize items based on science, on environmental benefit to the lake and on the good of the community. Whatever we do, we can't do it without your support.

DISCUSSION. Meeting attendees were invited to ask questions.

Q. Can you remind people who are weeding to remove the plant fragments from the lake?

A. Thank you for making that point. Fragments can grow into plants so please remove them.

Q: What was learned from **alum studies** done last year on near-by lakes?

A: The DEC made pilot alum applications on Peach Lake and Lake Mohegan. Peach Lake responded better than Lake Mohegan, but more study needs to be done to understand the factors involved. It is a very expensive treatment and we want to understand the elements for success if we want to consider it for one or more lakes.

Q: Since much of the phosphorus in the lakes comes from **internal loading**, why are we continuing to take steps to reduce phosphorus to our lakes?

A: Although our three lakes are alike in many ways, the internal loading is different in different lakes. Waccabuc has the highest amount of internal loading, Oscaleta has less, and Rippowam has the least. Successful treatment of internal loading assumes new sources are reduced. In addition, lakes stratify into layers during the summer. If the input of phosphorus into the top layer of the lake is reduced, less is available to fertilize the algae.

Q: Since no algal toxins have been detected in our lakes, why are we showing up on the NYS DEC registry for HABs?

A: Along with water samples, we send photos which the DEC uses to do blue green algae counts. Since nobody understands why and when blue green algae produce toxins, if a lake visually appears to have blue green algae or has a high cyanobacteria cell count, it is put on the state notification list because of the potential for toxin production.

Q: How many households are in the Three Lakes Council watershed?

A: There are about 435 homes in our watershed. About 350 homes have lake rights. In a typical year, approximately 200 homes join as members.

Q: Closing the preserve seems to have reduced the number of visitors, but some are still using the preserve and the lake. Is there a way of better enforcing the rules?

A: We continue to search for better answers, and hope that the word will spread that the preserve remains closed and that police will ticket illegally parked cars.

Q: It's expensive to get wetland permits and do weed removal individually. Can the Three Lakes Council help?

A: The Three Lakes Council does not have the resources in time or funds to address each individual lakefront's weed issues. As a reminder, a Town permit is not required for hand pulling of weeds. Use of harvesters is like mowing the lawn and has to be repeated. In a lake, vegetation will grow wherever sunlight and nutrients are available. Benthic barriers work if put down in the spring before plants have begun to grow, and may provide a path to deeper water where plants can't grow.

Q: Is it the Town or the Three Lakes Council that issues permits for **docks**?

A: The 3LC doesn't issue permits. In order to build a new dock, a Wetland Permit from the Town is required. Repairs in kind to an existing dock don't require a Wetland Permit.

Q: Can the 3LC set rules about dock placement and size?

A: The 3LC is focused on environmental issues, and has no enforcement capability. Dock issues might be addressed by the individual lake associations. The Lake Truesdale Association established guidelines, posted on their website, which might be a good template.

Q: Are there plants that hold the soil in place in wet areas and stand up to traffic?

A: Many wet areas are not compatible with a lot of foot traffic or use. Suggestions for wetland plants and shoreline plantings are available, and I'll share some links and resources.

Q: Is there a rule about the detergent used for power washing a house?

A: Not that I know of, but you can power wash using just plain water. Adding a little Clorox to the water can help remove algae and mold. Another attendee added that many commercial cleaners contain chemicals that are harmful to plants, animals and water.

Suggestion: Have this sort of Zoom meeting every year to allow more participation.

Closing Comments: Jan thanked Doug Housman and Michael Drucker for arranging and co-hosting this meeting. She reminded attendees to bring issues and questions to the Three Lakes Council through their board representatives or by contacting one of the officers.

Jan adjourned the meeting at 8:45 pm and thanked all for attending and wished everyone a healthy and happy season.

Respectfully submitted,
Jean Lewis, Secretary