

Three Lakes Council
Annual Meeting Minutes
August 8, 2022

The Annual Meeting of the Three Lakes Council was on August 8, 2022 at the Waccabuc Country Club Carriage House. About 90 people attended. President Janet Andersen welcomed everyone to the annual meeting saying, "This is our 52nd year! We are so happy to be together to enjoy a delicious potluck meal with our neighbors, and it is our way of getting members to attend our Annual Meeting!" We are an all-volunteer group and Janet thanked all who support our lake preservation efforts by becoming members and serving as volunteers.

Janet first thanked the many people who make this annual meeting possible:

- The Waccabuc Country Club which generously allows us to use their facility for this event and is helpful in so many other ways.
- The Potluck Coordinators and helpers: Kathy Rothfeld, who stepped in to lead the coordination and set up for Kelley Housman who couldn't attend this year. Thanks also to Jean Lewis and Ellen Bailey at our check in table, Wendy Stein, Marianne Pei, and all who helped with set up and clean up.
- Peter Gross who provided the sound system and music, as well as weekly music on Lake Oscaleta.
- The cooking and carving crew: Ron Tetelman, Robby Rothfeld, Gene Tedaldi, Paul Lewis, and Lou Feeney.
- And she thanked all who brought delicious contributions to our shared meal.

"I'd also like to acknowledge and thank members of the Board for their continuing efforts, and to acknowledge Katie McGinn who stepped down from her role as treasurer earlier this year. We are so fortunate that Ellen Bailey has agreed to become our treasurer. Thanks also to Peter Gross, vice president, and Jean Lewis, our long-time secretary."

Board members are appointed by each association around the lakes, and they bring each association's voice to Council. Lake association representatives to the Board are:

- Lake Oscaleta Association – T Rajwer
- Lake Waccabuc Association – Doug Housman and John Lemke
- Lakeside Association – Ron Tetelman
- Perch Bay Association – Ellen Bailey
- South Shore Association – Jonathan Peter
- Two Lake Club – Paul Lewis
- Waccabuc Landowners Council – Errol Antzis
- Waccabuc Country Club - Peter Hall

In addition to those appointed by the organizations, members can also elect at large directors. This year the at-large nominees were Kevin Karl and Jean Lewis. Their appointments were approved by a show of hands.

Executive Committee:

President - Janet Andersen
Vice President - Peter Gross
Treasurer - Ellen Bailey
Secretary - Jean Lewis

ANNUAL REPORT

The Three Lake Council's goal is to protect and preserve the waters of our three lakes. We focus on research and actions that affect the watershed, because the waters in our lakes truly reflect what happens in the watershed. Janet reported on the Three Lakes Council activities by season.

FALL & WINTER

- **Septic system engineering study:** The big event of the fall was the completion of the engineering study on Lake Waccabuc's septic systems. The study indicated that due to soil conditions, bedrock, high water table, and steep slopes around our lakes, very few of the parcels around Lake Waccabuc are optimum for septic systems. Yet septic systems are what we have. According to the report, the concern is compounded by the age of our septic systems. Around Lake Waccabuc, 65% of the systems were installed more than 50 years ago, which is EPA's estimated life span of a septic system. The study provided some potential solutions. However, decisions on what to implement and how will be up to us.
- A water **clarity committee** has been formed to consider potential ways of implementing solutions offered by the septic system engineering study. A core group has been established and others were encouraged to join or lead that committee.
- **Board activity:** Behind the scenes, the Board continued to meet to keep the organization running and in compliance.
- **Website:** We refreshed our website and added new reports. These include the Waccabuc Septic Engineering Study report, last year's aquatic plant survey report, and the report on last year's water conditions and chemistry. The website (Threelakescouncil.org) is a good first place to look for information.
- **Communications:** In addition to our website and annual Newsletter, we communicate importation information about the lakes in two other ways – emails sent via the Three Lake Council Google group, and Facebook. For anyone not receiving the Google group emails, please give Janet your email address so you get important updates. You can also like us on Facebook.
- **Channel passage:** Last year, members asked for improved passage via our channels. We contacted a company that does dredging and hydro raking to get an estimate for clearing the channel between Lake Waccabuc and Lake Oscaleta. That channel has become shallower because of beaver activity, and after the beaver cut down the trees, the increased sunlight has enabled more plant growth. Unfortunately, the channel is too narrow for this company's smallest hydro-rakes and dredging equipment. We explored just cutting a deeper channel through the lilies and spatterdock at the east end of Waccabuc, but we don't have a launch that can accommodate the smallest equipment they use. We will try to find another firm that might use smaller equipment.

SPRING

- **Geese stabilization:** In April, the Peter and Lyn Beardsley and J Durst carried out their 16th season of geese population stabilization. They oiled 39 eggs in 8 nests. Because of this initiative, many fewer geese drop phosphorus into our lakes.
- **Stream remediation:** We continued to work with the East of Hudson Corporation on stream remediation to reduce silt runoff into Lake Waccabuc. The preliminary engineering and cost work has been done and costs are acceptable. East of Hudson Corporation is now waiting for updated plans before proceeding. More to follow.
- **Impaired lake assessment from DEC:** This spring the NYSDEC added our lakes to the draft 2022 impaired water body list. This means that the lakes have pollutants that keep them from meeting the best uses for our lakes. The cause in all three lakes is phosphorus, and Waccabuc is also impaired by excess ammonia, a form of nitrogen. The final list has not yet come out, but no change for our lakes is expected. This assessment is based on data that we've collected over the years and reflects the condition of our lakes. The listing may eventually help us obtain grants.

SUMMER

- **Long Pond Preserve:** We have now owned the preserve for just over 6 years. Kevin Karl has continued to do an amazing job of keeping the trails on the preserve walkable, and he built bog bridges to cross wet areas. He has also been diligently whacking back invasive phragmites in the wetlands. We have budgeted to hire police to help manage the entrance to the preserve this year if we see an issue with boats, trash, or behavior. John Lemke is our police liaison.
- **Newsletter:** We mailed out our newsletter in July and left some for distribution to Waccabuc Country Club members. With more new people enjoying the lakes, this is an important way of introducing lake stewardship concepts. There are copies available for anyone who didn't receive the newsletter in the mail or want an extra copy for guests or renters.
- **Aquatic plant survey:** This year our plant survey took place on July 21 and 22 on Lakes Rippowam and Oscaleta. Our survey is a systematic way to track the changes in plant growth over time. Global warming continues to give a longer growing season and warmer lake waters. As a result, we are going to see more plants and denser stands of plants. The major purpose of our survey is to find new invasive species early, while we can take actions. Fortunately, no new invasive species were found this year. If you see a strange plant, please take a photo, and send it to Janet for identification.
- **CSLAP water testing:** We continued water quality sampling & testing on Lakes Waccabuc, Oscaleta and Rippowam as part of a NYS DEC program, CSLAP. Pre-season sampling began in April. As in past years, Jan emails a report via the Three Lakes Google Group after every formal monitoring session. Her reports focus on lake clarity in all three lakes. In addition to testing clarity, we also measure temperature, color, dissolved oxygen, phosphorus, nitrogen, chlorophyll, pH, conductivity, chloride, and calcium in our lakes. This long list combines to give a picture of lake conditions. In 2021 we sampled 10 times between April and December. Reports for each of our lakes in 2021 are on our website. Our research is helping us understand the normal variability for our lakes, how they compare to other lakes in our region, and should alert us quickly if we go off track.
- **Harmful algal blooms:** We also continue sampling to detect harmful algal blooms. We can send in samples if we see shoreline blooms. If high concentrations of cyanobacteria are present, the samples are tested for toxins. Not all blue green algae blooms produce toxins, but some do. Last year toxins were found to be present on all three lakes.
- **AI pilot project:** We are participating in a new business pilot project to teach artificial intelligence to recognize cyanobacteria in the water column. Every time we sample, we take pictures of the water through a microscope. We then see whether AI agrees with human identified algae. This research may lead to a way to provide very quick feedback on algae identification and density counts for prompt alerts.

Financial Report: We are in good financial shape. After a couple of years when we spent more than we took in, the last two years were different. During the pandemic we weren't quite as active spending money, and our 50th year anniversary book brought in additional funds. Last year, 214 members contributed \$43,461, and we spent \$23,996. So far this year, about \$26,663 has been donated by 186 members, and we have spent about \$21,835. Regarding unspent funds, our 2019 management plan suggested that we consider nutrient reduction approaches for our lakes. While we have some funds on hand, we will need to raise more to implement that recommendation if or when the DEC allows currently available options. Also, if our clarity committee decides to take some actions, we will have some funds on hand to jump start communications or activities. We thank all our members, and we are especially grateful to those who very generously provide additional donations above the membership amount.

Comprehensive Plan Update: The Town of Lewisboro has started a comprehensive plan update, the first since 1985. To gather public input regarding what residents would like to see in the future for Lewisboro, the town will hold surveys and public forums this fall and winter, likely both online and in

person. When you share your ideas, please also emphasize how important it is to protect the lakes and natural areas that make our community so special.

Septic Pumping: It is necessary for everyone to take personal responsibility for pumping out your septic system. The Waccabuc study indicated that only about 60% of the residents around Lake Waccabuc had pumped their septic system as the law requires, which is only once every 5 years. Older homes and lakeside homes should probably pump more frequently. If you can't remember when you last pumped, it's probably time to get it done! Also, I applaud the homeowners on South Shore who have agreed to run dye tests on all their septic systems.

Algae: There were two different kinds of algae on Lake Waccabuc this year. During the Spring we had some bubbling green filamentous algae which usually looks like cotton candy underwater. It releases gasses that get caught in the filaments and will rise to the surface. It's a nuisance, but not harmful. The green algae didn't seem as bad on any of our lakes this year as last year. On the other hand, we had green particles in the water, and the water column looked like pea soup. That was a cyanobacteria bloom, a blue-green algae bloom, and it was lake wide. We have had more frequent blooms on Waccabuc recently. To seek ways of stopping them, join the clarity committee.

Clarity Committee: The draft mission of the clarity committee is to:

- understand the sources and magnitude of algae blooms and plant growth on our lakes
- identify potential actions that address the blooms – using Waccabuc as a pilot
- educate stakeholders and build consensus for one or more actions
- assess funding options and if applicable, apply for grants
- manage project(s) and / or turn projects over to applicable association(s)
- assess impacts of action and go back to first step as needed

One recommendation of the Waccabuc study was to consider a sewer system to serve all in the watershed. This would require homes to vote for establishing a sewer tax district. That's just one step in a long effort. Before the clarity committee starts down this path, Janet asked for a show of hands of those who think they would be willing to tie your house to a sewer and think that option should be one of the ones to be explored. (quite a few hands were raised).

Q&A Session:

Q. Can we consider a sewer system to include our other two lakes?

A. It could potentially. One decision of the clarity committee might be to authorize an engineering study to assess the costs and benefits of adding homes around Oscaleta and Rippowam.

Q. Could we have a show of hands of those in the entire watershed who think the clarity committee should look at a sewer system for all three lakes?

A. Many hands were raised in the room.

Q. What about a sewer system to include all of the lakes in town?

A. The report sized a sewer system that would address both Truesdale and Waccabuc. It would be located at the sewer system at the former Lewisboro Elementary School but would have to be expanded and at least portions of the current school would have to be torn down. The cost for just the Waccabuc watershed to have a sewage treatment plant at LES was estimated at \$34.1M.

Q. Should we work on internal loading if we still have phosphorus coming into the lakes?

A. It's true the life span of solutions to internal loading are lessened if more phosphorus is entering the lakes. However, we need to work on everything.

Q. Aren't septic systems the greatest source of phosphorus to our lakes, or second after internal loading?

A. Maybe. The Waccabuc report said that depending on the assumed septic system failure rate, the range of phosphorus from septics could be between 10% and 90%. [The report says 9.6% to 92.4%]. The 2019 watershed report for the three lakes recommended working on internal loading first, then stormwater, then septics. I think we need to work on reducing all phosphorus input, from picking up pet waste to big projects.

Q. We used to have a discount if a group of people pumped their septics at once. Can we do that?

A. That's a great idea for the clarity committee to consider. As I recall, it wasn't used a lot and it required someone to assume leadership. Some lakes add the cost of pumping every three years into their association dues, and then member systems are pumped automatically. China Pond is an example. Our associations could do that too.

Q. What's the result of the chemical treatment [alum] at Peach Lake?

A. I don't know of a chemical treatment at Peach Lake, and it's too early to see results of their new sewer system. They expect it to take about 20 years after the sewer system was installed to see an improvement.

Q. How many cesspools are around our lake? If effluent from your septic tank goes to fields, could it still pollute the lake?

A. I don't know offhand the number of cesspools; the Septic System Engineering Study report might say. But yes, septic systems that have fields can still pollute. The report distinguishes failing septic systems from non-functioning septic systems that might be on steep slopes, above bedrock, or close to the water table. Phosphorus in septic fields needs to bind to the soil. Studies estimate that the binding sites will become saturated and travel about 3 feet a year downslope, so even well-placed fields 150 feet from the lake could be contributing phosphorus after 50 years.

Q. Can't you call it something nicer than a septic or sewer system?

A. Another job for the clarity committee!

Q: Where does the water in our lakes come from besides rainfall?

A. Our lakes have two main tributaries, one into Oscaleta from Round Pound in Connecticut, and one off the golf course into Waccabuc. We have several smaller and intermittent streams. Water also comes from springs and groundwater.

Q. Are white water lilies protected?

A. No. They are native, but they can grow to nuisance densities, and you can hand harvest them.

The meeting was adjourned at around 7:25 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Jean Lewis, Secretary