

Lake Auburn Watershed Protection Commission Newsletter

December 2019

LA Trails and Community



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Connections to Nature and History: The Value of Trails in Watershed Conservation

By: Joshua Nagine, LA Trails

There are two schools of thought concerning watershed preservation and conservation. One theory of conservation focuses primarily on the wildness of conservation lands and waterways, and there are many good arguments for prescribing a 'do not disturb' approach to conservation, although they rarely apply to modified environments that are used as a resource by neighboring communities in a suburban or city setting. The other approach is conservation via management and stewardship, which is what I would like to focus on and bring attention to regarding LAWPC public access lands and the working watershed around Lake Auburn.

First, historical context is important. Lake Auburn has loomed large in the region not only due to its sheer size, but for the part it has played in providing for and developing our region. From formation over 12,000 years ago, Lake Auburn has played a role in providing transportation routes, recreation as well as food and water resources in the region to both man and beast. Long before the first European settlers arrived, the native human inhabitants of this region camped seasonally in the woodlands along the shores, fished its waters and used Lake Auburn to bypass Amitgonpontook (Great Falls) when traversing the Androscoggin River and as a connector to the Little Androscoggin.

Lake Auburn has acted as a recreation destination and resource ever since. From the founding of the community at Young's corner and West Auburn Village, the construction of the original Spring Road (now Merrick's Way) and the Lake Auburn Spring House and Lake Grove Ferry, the city of Auburn using Lake Auburn as its water supply as early as 1879, with Lewiston following in 1899, the cottages and summer homes that once dotted its shores, to its current role as a watershed conservation area and fishing destination, the value of this resource and its connection to our history is truly priceless. It also plays a huge role in our present and future.

The management of the lands that directly impact our water quality fall under the purview of LAWPC, and it's a job of critical importance. Lake Auburn is one of less than a dozen municipal water sources in the state that receives a federal waiver that allows us to bypass a filtration requirement by the EPA, saving our municipalities millions of dollars in construction and maintenance costs. The sole reason for this exemption is Lake Auburn's exceptional water quality, which could easily be altered by poor management or unwise development within the watershed. Currently, over 65% of Lake Auburn's water flows from the watershed, a 15 square mile area in five different towns around the lake.

As residents, we reap the benefits of LAWPC's work, many of us are unaware of the importance of the resource LAWPC has been entrusted to protect. Many of the lands adjacent to Lake Auburn are held by LAWPC, and on many there are conservation easements that have been granted via Androscoggin Land Trust to ensure in perpetuity conservation of wildlife habitat and the quality of our drinking water within the watershed. Preservation of the watershed is of critical importance to both organizations.

Now to trails. LAWPC's mission is to ensure the water quality of Lake Auburn. They reach this goal via management of the watershed, education and outreach. Many of the parcels LAWPC manages are open to low impact public use. To reach the shores of Lake Auburn and traverse the forestlands, environmentally friendly low impact trails are required. This also overlaps with the mission of outreach and education concerning the watershed. It's hard to place value on the conservation of a resource you aren't familiar with. Trail access and maintenance is within the scope of LAWPC's mission in order to allow responsible and low impact access to our shared resource.

The watershed supports our drinking water and a valuable sport fishery. In some places, the Lake Auburn watershed is far from a wilderness area, with a major arterial road and hundreds of residences and businesses within striking distance of its shores. In others, the lands are home to a surprising array of flora and fauna, including habitat for species that require conservation. The greenway also acts as a 'highway' for passing wildlife. There are also trails that run through the watershed, some of which are used extensively. There is a cause and effect at play that requires constant effort to balance for our benefit. In many instances, this greenway is also our greenway. Ours to explore, experience and conserve. Ours to recreate and rusticate responsibly in. While it is ours to enjoy, it is also ours to lose.

Improper use and environmental degradation of the watershed and the trails can close these properties to the public, which is why we need to appreciate the value of these trails and the watershed as if we are those who are charged to manage it. Taking ownership of our public access lands is intertwined with stewardship. Leaving it how you left it or better and treating these places as you would your own ensure all of us are able to continue to enjoy public access lands and trails. There are currently three major trails within the watershed under LAWPC's management at the moment. I would highly encourage everyone to visit and experience these trails a short ride from your front door.



Check out LA trails
and their initiatives
online at
www.latrails.org

Trails Overview:

The Whitman Spring Road Trail is the crown jewel, with maintenance shared between the municipalities of Lewiston and Auburn, this 2.1 mile trail traverses the northwestern edge of the lake, with connectors to the Spring House Trail and Merricks Way, connecting several trails provided and maintained by the Lake Auburn Community Center, CeMeNEMBA and local chapters of the Maine Snowmobile Association. This trail is a four season wonder for walking, jogging, biking, snowshoeing, nordic skiing and fat biking.



The Salmon Point Trail starts across the road from the terminus of Maple Hill Rd. at Lakeshore Drive on a peninsula on the northern side of Lake Auburn. Long known by local fishermen as a great access point to a deep water shelf along the shore, this trail of slightly less than .75 of a mile follows an old access road on a gradual grade to open up at the shoreline for spectacular views of the lake.

Parcel Four Trail runs along the eastern side of the lake, with the trailhead located

approximately .25 mile above the boat launch on Route Four. This short trail is a quick trip to a magnificent view of the lake on exposed ledge passing through healthy tree and forest undergrowth.



The importance of these trails cannot be overstated. They provide access to Lake Auburn, allowing all of us to be physically connected to the watershed and shores of our lake and experience the natural beauty and scenic setting that our water is sourced from. This is our responsibility and our privilege. Picking up that piece of litter that ended up on LAWPC lands transforms a passive witness to an active defender of our natural environment. Reporting trail concerns, improper usage and invasives is part and parcel of responsible use and stewardship of these lands and trails.

Data is the driving force behind public access land and watershed management as well as trail planning and maintenance. LA Trails recently completed a trail usage study in concert with LAWPC with the help of students from Bates College, employing a passive means of observation to see how often and by what means trails are used by the public. Projects like these allow trail managers to evaluate human impact and plan for future use. They also allow us to get an idea of the types of wildlife that traverse our trails, which in and of itself holds value. We are thankful for LAWPC's participation as we tested the methodology and practicality of the method used for data collection.

LA Trails is committed to promoting, educating, advocating for, maintaining and expanding our trail system by collaborating with trail stakeholders and the public to ensure best practices for management and access. We have partnered with LAWPC in the past and plan to do much more in the future to promote the work. Proper management of the watershed lands and Lake Auburn affects us all. By promoting public participation and educating for responsible use, LAWPC and LA Trails are hoping you'll become an active steward of the watershed and lake. Stay tuned for opportunities to get involved and support the work of our trail stakeholders and managers. Get out there and #GETONTHE TRAILS!

Follow Up to the Alum Treatment of Lake Auburn

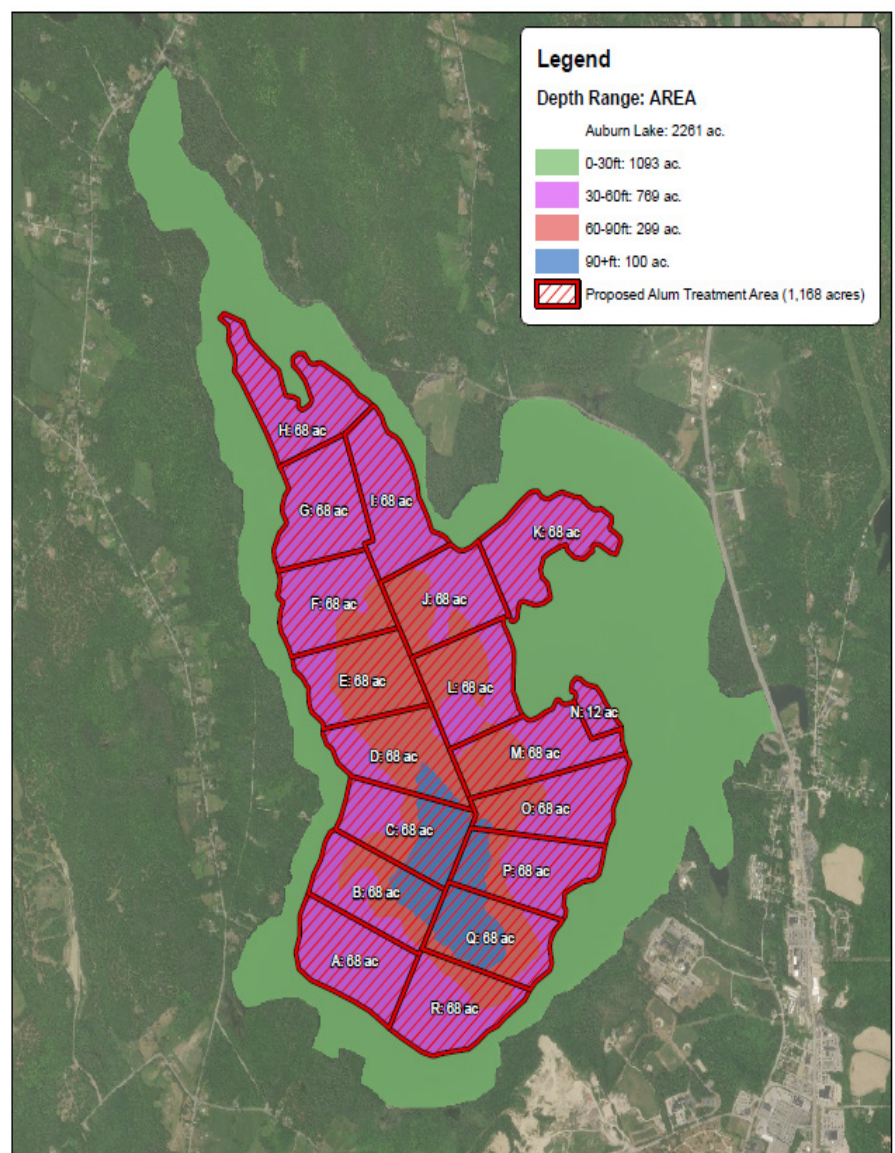
by Erica Kidd, Watershed Manager

In the Summer Newsletter, I wrote about the alum treatment in Lake Auburn that was taking place. This was a chemical treatment of the lake to bind phosphorus, with the goal of fewer algae blooms and increased water quality for the next several years.

The first half of the alum treatment was conducted from early July through early August, with the second half of the treatment following in October. SOLitude Lake Management carried out the application, and staff and volunteers from ME DEP, Lake Stewards of Maine, and the Cobbossee Watershed District performed the in-lake monitoring. USDA staff monitored wildlife around the lake as well.

The treatment was successfully carried out as planned, with 1,200 acres of the lake treated with a 2 mg/L dose of alum. All drinking water standards were met during the application. We will continue to address sources of phosphorus in the watershed to ensure the long-lasting, positive impact of this treatment.

I would like to again thank all of our partners who helped make this project a success: Dr. Ken Wagner (Water Resource Services), Lake Stewards of Maine, Cobbossee Watershed District, SOLitude Lake Management, Tighe & Bond, USDA-Wildlife Services, Dr. Holly Ewing (Bates College), ME DEP, ME IFW, and ME Drinking Water Program.



Alum application treatment zones



Check out our compilation video of the 2019 Alum Application Project on Lake Auburn

*Please go to our website:
www.lakeauburnwater.org and click
on the YouTube link*

Great Maine Beer Comes from Clean Maine Water

What do you think is the most important ingredient in beer? Simple answer: the water. Many would think it is the unique combination barley, yeast, and hops, but ask any head brewer and they'll agree, that water is key.

It is important to note it is not by accident that Maine is known for producing some of the best beer in the country. Our protected lands and preserved watersheds are what create the perfect natural filtration system that produces that natural and very pure water that Maine brewers use. Maine is fortunate to be one of a few places in the country that have a water source like that.

This is why it is imperative that we protect and conserve outer lying areas; from the smallest streams, to wetlands, river-ways, and our watersheds across the state. Great Maine beer comes from clean Maine water.

Scott Heidrich – The Maine Beer Guy & Ambassador of the Maine Brewshed Alliance

We at the LAWPC would like to thank Scott for working with us at our local breweries to support keeping Lake Auburn clean.

<https://www.instagram.com/themainebeerguy/> - Instagram

<https://www.facebook.com/MaineBeerGuy/> - Facebook



News and Events!

Tuesday February 4th 4-6:30pm
Lewiston Public Library

Climate Communications Workshop



This training will help you communicate more effectively with Mainers on the topic of climate change. Based on extensive Maine social research conducted by a team of strategic communication professionals, the training workshop includes information on modern brain science as well as findings on how to change opinion and move audiences to action. The trainer leads attendees through a multimedia presentation with plenty of time for discussion and practice. No matter your audience, you will gain helpful insights on how to better reach and connect with them. All are welcome, no prior experience with communications necessary. All trainees who complete the training workshop receive the print edition of Communication with Mainers of Climate Change Toolkit.

Learn more and RSVP here: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/83671249961>

Past Events



Edward Little High School Students on a Treatment Plant Tour with Plant Manager Chris Curtis



Isabelle Gandiner - "Ocean View" from LA Artwalk, a Bear Bones Beer and LAWPC collaboration 'Water' themed art show.



View of Lake Auburn



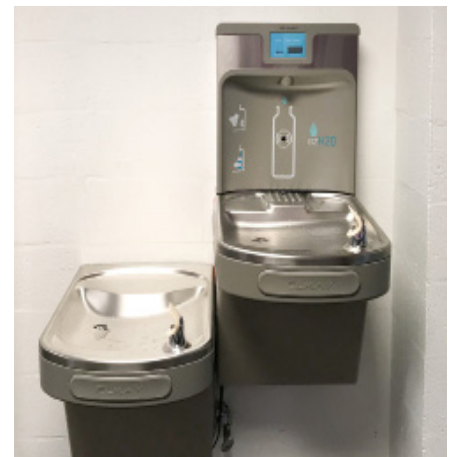
Conservation Easement Walk with Androscoggin
Land Trust November, 2019

Are you a water customer? Is your organization looking to increase public water access?

Apply for the Water Bottle Refill Station Grant! For your community organization or school!

The Lake Auburn Watershed Protection Commission is awarding funds to community organizations for installation of a water bottle fill station or the retrofit of an existing fountain. This grant allows greater community access to clean drinking water. This award will grant up to \$4,000 in units. Type of unit and estimated cost is due with the application.

Applications are Due on February 1st
Applications and more information can be found
online at www.lakeauburnwater.org



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check us out at www.lakeauburnwater.org

Switching to an electronic newsletter will help us save more trees!

You can subscribe by emailing lolson@awsd.org