

Lake Auburn Watershed Protection Commission

April 2022 Newsletter

What's Inside This Issue?

- Drinking Water FAQs
- Ice out, dock in
- Past events
- Upcoming events
- Earth Day
- Spring Cleaning

Upcoming Events

- April 30 - Vernal Pool Nature Walk



Lake Auburn, March 2022

Drinking Water FAQs

How is my water treated?

Water from Lake Auburn goes through coarse mesh screens which strain out leaves, grasses, and other solids. The water is then disinfected with Ultra Violet light treatment to inactivate viruses. Chlorine is added to disinfect any pathogens. The water treatment process continues by adding sodium hydroxide for pH balance, orthophosphate for corrosion control, and fluoride. Then, the treated water enters the distribution system.

What is a filtration plant, and why don't we have one?

A filtration plant chemically, biologically, and physically separates out contaminants from drinking water. Due to Lake Auburn's superior water quality, the EPA determined that water from Lake Auburn meets all requirements of the Safe Drinking Water Act, Surface Water Treatment Rule. This allows Auburn Water District and Lewiston Water Division to maintain a filtration waiver. In simple terms, since there aren't contaminants to filter out, we don't need a filtration plant. A filtration plant would cost at least \$35 million to build, \$2 million annually to maintain, and would increase customer water rates by 100-200%.

Is chlorine safe to drink?

Chlorine is safe to ingest as long as it is diluted and in small amounts. The CDC states that chlorine levels up to 4 milligrams per liter (mg/L or 4 parts per million (ppm)) are safe to drink. If you have specific health concerns contact your local water utility and healthcare provider.

Is the water in Auburn and Lewiston the same?

The water for Auburn and Lewiston come from the same location and are treated the same way. Lewiston on occasion has a slightly higher dosage of chlorine, but that is only because a higher volume of water is being distributed to Lewiston.

Is there lead in my water?

Lead is not present in Lake Auburn, the water from the treatment plant, or the Lewiston or Auburn distribution pipes leading to homes, businesses, and municipalities. Traces of lead may come from lead solder used inside buildings to join pipes, lead lined service pipes, or household fixtures like a faucet.

Drinking Water FAQs

Why does my water suddenly smell like chlorine?

If it suddenly starts to smell, it is because the chlorine is reacting with a compound locally to the tap. Water is treated with a set dosage of chlorine at the treatment plant and is safe to drink. If you have concerns call your local water utility.

Why does my water have a slight brown/red color?

Water might have a slight color due to cast iron pipes, or due to events such as hydrant flushing or a water main break. If your water has a slightly different color, keep the water running for a minute or two until it runs clear. If it does not turn clear call your local water utility.

How regulated is the water?

The Treatment Plant reports all data to the EPA and submits monthly reports to the Maine Drinking Water Program, which is run by the Maine Department of Health and Human Services. Water coming from the Lake Auburn intake pipe and into the treatment plant is continuously monitored for pH, turbidity, dissolved oxygen, total dissolved solids, conductivity, and temperature. Water leaving the treatment plant is continuously monitored for levels of fluoride, chlorine, pH, and temperature. Every day at both distribution systems, (Auburn Water District, and Lewiston Water Division) water samples are tested for levels of fluoride, chlorine, chlorine residuals, pH, temperature, orthophosphate, and bacteria. The Bates Weather Buoy that is out on the water from spring through fall, constantly monitors water quality while giving live updates every 15 minutes. Water quality specialists from Lewiston and Auburn sample the lake every week from when Lake Auburn is Ice Out (spring) to lake turnover (late fall).

Any and all questions about your tap water should be directed to your local water utility. They will not know there is an issue unless you reach out.

Auburn Water District:
(207) 784-6469
7:30 am - 4:00 pm (M-F)
awsd.org

Lewiston Water Division:
(207) 513-3003
7:00 am - 4:00 pm (M-F)
lewistonmaine.gov/195/Water-Sewer-Division

Ice out, Docks in

If it seems a little busier as you pass the lake on Route 4, it's because the boats and fishers are back out! Lake Auburn was "Ice out" on April 8th. Ice out on Lake Auburn means all ice is gone, however different lakes may use a different measurement to determine Ice out. On the same day, Auburn Water District put the dock back in at the public access ramp. Information on fishing and boating licenses can be found on the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife website. Some common fish found in Lake Auburn are trout, perch, sunnies, and bass. Please remember there is no bodily contact allowed with Lake Auburn and individuals can be fined \$2,500 per incident. To help prevent the spread of invasive species, courtesy boat inspections will start Memorial Day weekend and go through Labor Day.



Lake Auburn boat launch off Route 4

Lake Auburn Watershed Protection Commission
invites you to submit photos to be considered
for our first annual calendar in 2023.



Submission requirements:

- Photos must be taken within the Lake Auburn Watershed and include Lake Auburn or one of its tributaries.
- Photos must be digital, in high resolution (300 dpi minimum), in landscape/horizontal mode, and uncropped and unaltered (no adjustments, no enhancements, no filters, no watermarks)

Full details and requirements can be viewed on our website.

Past Events

Field Trips

This past winter, students buckled up their snowshoes and visited the watershed for some nature-based field trips. Classes from Auburn Middle School, Edward Little High School, and the Androscoggin Valley Educational Collaborative (AVEC) Math/Science program had outdoor field trips exploring and learning about the nature around them. USDA Wildlife biologist Ben Nugent led two of these field trips and provided amazing information, anecdotes, and tips on our environment. These field trips followed the structure of: if you see something cool, point to it and we'll talk about it. Students learned about different wildlife, animal behavior, animal tracking, tree identification, native plants, fungi, habitat conditions, Lake Auburn, and how the watershed is connected.



Students from Auburn Middle School
Special and Alternative Education



Students from the AVEC program



Deer bed



Students from Edward Little High
School tasting Balsam fir trees

Nature Walks

All of our trails stay open during the winter! We hosted a few free nature walks this season. The first was February 7th, USDA Wildlife Biologist Ben Nugent led a Winter Wildlife walk on our Summer St. Conservation Easement. We spotted animal prints and learned how to identify them using an ID card, spacing, drags, size, and other indicators. We then were able to track a male fox as it went through a hunt.



On March 1st we held a Winter Tree ID and Nature Walk at Salmon Point Trail. This walk was led by Maine Master Naturalist Heather Hardy. She explained that winter is her favorite time to learn and practice tree identification because there are less variables and foliage to distract you. This event had participants from up the road in Auburn, to all the way in Bath, Biddeford, and Woodstock. This walk heavily emphasized observing key characteristics of a tree before jumping to identify it. We used our senses to describe parts of trees first. What colors are in the bark, what does the texture remind you of, how does it smell, what features can you count?

March 26th we held another Tree ID and Nature Walk with Androscoggin Land Trust (ALT). ALT board member Paula Everett led the walk and started off with the fascinating history of the Lake Auburn Watershed. Salmon Point Trail, as well as much of the watershed, is located on an old, planted Red pine stand. This walk brought a lot of new faces together and we cannot wait for more collaborations.

More Past Events

We also held events that didn't require two pairs of socks and jackets. On February 8th, the Center for Wildlife gave a Zoom presentation on the connections between water and wildlife. They discussed different native animals in our area such as salamanders, turtles, owls, and invertebrates. Salamanders and Wood frogs are indicators of high water quality. They breed in vernal pools and will only breed and live in nutrient rich areas with clean water. Seeing them is a sign that the watershed is healthy! These nutrient dense locations are habitat for small wildlife, which then can be a source of food for larger wildlife. Some wildlife drop native seeds and vegetation through their waste, contributing to increased vegetation which causes decreased erosion and surface runoff. With all of these together, wildlife needs clean water to survive, and wildlife in return maintains a healthy balanced ecosystem that can increase water quality.



Water and Wildlife, Center for Wildlife

To celebrate World Water Day in March, we partnered with Lake Stewards of Maine and Auburn Recreation & Sports Tourism to have a tabling event at the Norway Savings Bank Arena. At this tabling event teaching about drinking water we met a lot of new members of the public. The Norway Savings Bank Arena and Auburn Recreation & Sports Tourism ended up donating half of their ticket costs to Lake Stewards of Maine!

Earth Day and Upcoming Events

Earth day is recognized to celebrate Earth and the environment around us, as well as to protect them. It was first held April 22nd, 1970 to protest "against the impacts of 150 years of industrial development which had left a growing legacy of serious human health impacts" (EARTHDAY). Due to all the individuals and groups demanding environmental change, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was created later that year. Taking individual action to protect the environment is one of the best things anyone can do, and more often than not you are not the only one working towards a better environment. These small actions have a domino affect that can result in actual change, protection, and restoration. Small actions start with getting outside to learn and explore. Join LAWPC while celebrating Earth Day, full event details can be found on our website.

April 30th - Vernal Pool Nature Walk with Androscoggin Land Trust

Join us and Androscoggin Land Trust for a guided walk learning about vernal pools in the watershed! This walk will be held at the Sherwood Forest Conservation Area.



Earthrise

Amanda Gorman, inaugural poet and first National Youth Poet Laureate for the U.S., wrote and performed a poem titled Earthrise. Even though the first Earth Day was over 50 years ago, fights for a healthy environment continue today. Her poem expresses the urgency to take action protecting our environment because harm cannot be reversed, consequences are already starting to occur, poorer communities continue to suffer the affects of environmental degradation more than others, and despite diversity and differences, everyone shares Earth along with the responsibility to respect and take care of Earth. Below is an excerpt of her poem. You can read the full poem by searching Earthrise by Amanda Gorman.

Our Purpose in Poetry

Or, Earthrise

Dedicated to Al Gore and The Climate Reality Project

On Christmas Eve, 1968, astronaut Bill Anders
Snapped a photo of the earth
As Apollo 8 orbited the moon.
Those three guys
Were surprised
To see from their eyes
Our planet looked like an earthrise
A blue orb hovering over the moon's gray horizon,
with deep oceans and silver skies.

It was our world's first glance at itself
Our first chance to see a shared reality,
A declared stance and a commonality;

A glimpse into our planet' mirror,
And as threats drew nearer,
Our own urgency became clearer,
As we realize that we hold nothing dearer
than this floating body we all call home.



April Showers Bring Surface Runoff



Surface runoff is precipitation like rain or snowmelt that flows over the landscape of the watershed. It can run over vegetation, homes, driveways, and through tributaries that lead to Lake Auburn. Large amounts of precipitation on areas where there is poor soil can cause erosion. Erosion leads to excess soil, and phosphorus that naturally occurs in soil, to enter the lake. This is one of the leading causes of algae blooms.

How can we prevent erosion? We can prevent erosion by having healthy, porous landscapes. This spring, limit the amount of land you mow. If you have to mow your lawn, make sure that the blade is set to high. Long grass is great for keeping pollutants out of the lake. Plant native species in your yard and remove invasive species. Native plants will help increase vegetation, creating more healthy and porous soils. They also require less maintenance and provide habitat and resources for the wildlife in the area. Lastly if you see an area that is being eroded, let the Lake Auburn Watershed Protection Commission know!

Another way to prevent erosion and algae blooms from surface runoff is with proper drainage. Vegetated areas absorb and filter water. On impervious surfaces like pavement, water rapidly runs off and picks up pollutants. Culverts and the vegetated ditches around them are designed to divert surface runoff away from impervious surfaces and areas with high erosion. This minimizes soil being eroded and pollutants being deposited into the lake. Culverts are very effective as long as the water going into them is clean.

How do we prevent polluted surface water? We can prevent polluted surface water by being proactive in waste management and use of fertilizers. Waste from septic tanks, dogs, and horses in the watershed contain phosphorus and could potentially have nasty parasites and bacteria like giardia and salmonella. To reduce pollution make sure to routinely check your septic tank for malfunctions. This maintenance will not only protect the lake but will also prevent septic system failure, which in turn would save thousands of dollars in unnecessary repairs. It is recommended to pump your septic tank ever 2-3 years. Next, please clean up after your domesticated animals. Scoop that poop and throw it away directly into your garbage. For larger animals like horses, use the waste as compost or have it hauled off the property. Lastly, to prevent polluted waters, avoid using phosphorus-based fertilizers. Phosphorus-based fertilizers in the lake are very likely to spark an algae bloom and decrease the water quality of Lake Auburn. Most lawns and gardens don't require fertilizers to grow.

Lake Auburn Watershed Protection

Commission 268 Court Street

Auburn, ME 04210



@LAKEAUBURN



@LAKEAUBURNWATER

Check us out at <https://lakeauburnwater.org/>

Switching to an electronic newsletter will help us save paper! You can subscribe by emailing choutz@awsd.org