

Lake Auburn Watershed Protection Commission

September 2022 Newsletter

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Lake Auburn, August 2022

Commission Changes

In June the Lake Auburn Watershed Protection Commission recognized Steve French, former Chair, and representative of Hebron, Minot, and Buckfield, for his dedicated work towards preserving the water quality of Lake Auburn. He had been part of LAWPC for close to 15 years. His hard work, knowledge, and smile will be missed, thank you Steve!



Rick LaChappelle has joined as the Lewiston City Council Representative and Glen Holmes has joined as the representative for the Towns of Minot, Hebron, and Buckfield.

Upcoming Event: Trail Day and Donuts

Join us Saturday, September 17th from 9:00 AM – 11:00AM as we build the Townsend Brook Trail. Building the walking trail is the first step in the long-term project to create an outdoor education center. The final education center will include outdoor gathering spaces for classes and groups, information along the trail about native habitats and water quality, and a connecting accessible trail.

Bring a friend, some water, boots, and help us build this trail! All levels of skill and outdoor comfort are welcome. Tools will be provided but please bring your own if possible. There will also be water, coffee, and donuts. Parking will be at the Auburn Tot Lot, 114 Fish Hatchery Rd, Auburn, ME 04210.

RSVP through the link below and contact Carolyn at choutz@awsd.org with any questions.

<https://conta.cc/3AFQNp7>



Past Events

Trout Release

In May, 5th grade students from the Hebron Station School released trout fry into The Basin, a tributary of Lake Auburn, that they had raised from eggs in their classroom. The months leading up to the release they borrowed LAWPC's educational kits and learned about trout anatomy, habitat, food sources, watersheds, pollutants, and more. Before the release they measured stream temperature, dissolved oxygen, pH, nitrate and phosphorus levels, and observed macroinvertebrates. Education and Outreach Coordinator Carolyn was with them and participated on the release day.



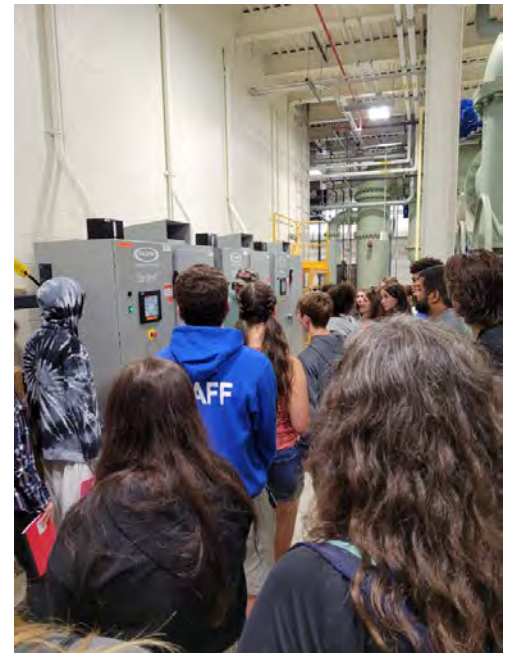
ELHS Community Day

Students from Edward Little High School volunteered with us for their Community Service Day. They cleared the first section of the Townsend Brook Trail and learned about trail maintenance and outdoor safety. Next they planted native Witch hazel and Cranebill to create vegetated buffers. These buffers create stronger erosion-resistant soil, capture runoff, and create barriers to prevent pollution and people entering the stream. Thank you Edward Little High School for all the help!



Leavitt Plant Tour

Students from Leavitt High School took a class trip with us. First they took a tour of the treatment plant and learned about Lake Auburn, Ultra-Violet Treatment, and how Lake Auburn is one of the few water utilities in Maine that is unfiltered because of its superior water quality. Water-rate payers in Lewiston and Auburn save millions of dollars a year because Lake Auburn is unfiltered. Students then had a watershed and water treatment Q&A session where we discussed various topics like conservation, swimming in Lake Auburn, stewardship, and different costs of water treatment.



Wednesday Walk with Stanton Bird Club

In June we partnered with Stanton Bird Club for one of their Wednesday Walks. This walk started from the Southern end of the Whitman Spring Road Trail and went all the way up to the Hotel Loop and back. We talked about the history of Lake Auburn, how Lake Auburn is an unfiltered drinking supply, how individuals can protect watersheds, and of course...birds. The following is a list of birds that we saw or heard (H) on the walk. The list was provided by Stanton Bird Club.

Canada Goose , Mourning Dove , Common Loon , Double-crested Cormorant, Red-shouldered Hawk (H), Broad-winged Hawk (H), Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Great Crested Flycatcher (H) , Eastern Kingbird (H) , Eastern Wood-Pewee (H) , Eastern Phoebe (H), Red-eyed Vireo (H), Blue Jay, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Red-breasted Nuthatch (H), House Wren (H), Veery (H), American Robin, House Finch (H), Song Sparrow , Ovenbird (H), Black-and-white Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Northern Parula, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Pine Warbler (H), Black-throated Green Warbler, Scarlet Tanager (H).



Living Soil Network

Spero Latchis from The Living Soil Network presented *The Ecology of Soil and Water: The Importance of Microbial Life in the Soil Sponge*. This online presentation described how biologically healthy soil is the necessary foundation for our healthy waters. Soil that is working with fungi, microbes, and vegetation is able to capture and filter large quantities of water, withstand erosion, and does not need added fertilizers or nutrients to maintain plants.

Cover Cropping for Gardeners and Farmers

University of Maine Cooperative Extension Specialist Jason Lilley presented Cover Cropping for Farmers and Gardeners. This event was part of our Soil and Water Talk Series with the Androscoggin Valley Soil and Water Conservation District, and was sponsored by AVSWCD. Jason first discussed what cover crops are and how we can benefit from them. Distinct benefits of cover cropping are increased yields, increased nutrients, decreased erosion, and decreased weeds. The increased vegetation increases soil health by allowing more water infiltration and eliminating exposed soil. These benefits are extremely important in the Lake Auburn watershed to help prevent pollution or excess soil from entering the lake. Visit our website for more information on cover cropping.



Camp Smiles

Camp Smiles, a Lewiston Recreational day camp visited us in July for a field trip about the Lake Auburn Watershed. First they took a tour of the treatment plant, then they looked at the equipment the water quality specialists use to monitor and test Lake Auburn. After a lunch break campers broke into 3 stations to do some hands-on activities.

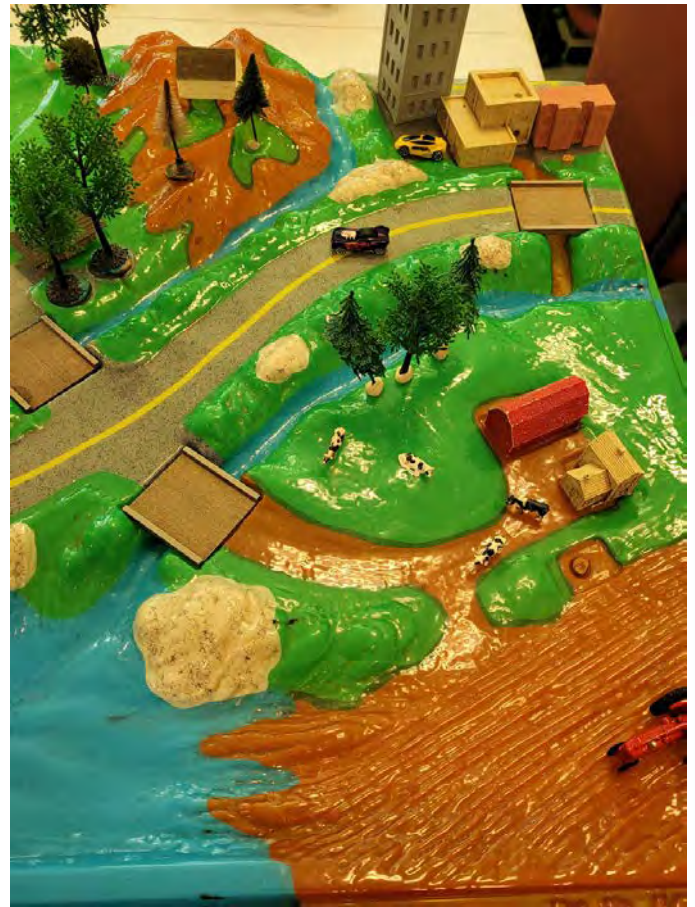


The first activity had a wildlife focus. Campers identified macroinvertebrates, played a mix-and-match game of animals and droppings, and compared their arm span to the wing span of different birds. Thank you to the Stanton Bird Club for letting us borrow their wing span banner! At the second activity station campers made observations about different tree leaves and needles. Afterwards they used their notes to identify trees around the property. In the third activity campers were able to do hands-on water testing of Lake Auburn by measuring pH and dissolved oxygen.



Where Does Your Water Come From?

This program was presented as part of Auburn Public Library's Adult Summer Reading Program, "Oceans of Possibilities" where adults spent time exploring Maine's waterways. Our event *Where Does Your Water Come From?* followed a drop of water through the Lake Auburn Watershed. We went over what a watershed is, surface runoff, different pollutants water might encounter, unfiltered water supplies, UV-Treatment, testing and monitoring, and how conserved areas naturally filter water. At the end there was a pollution and surface runoff demonstration.



Lake Auburn Walk and Talk

On this beautiful July morning we had a walk starting at the North End of the Whitman Spring Road, to the Hotel Loop, and back. While enjoying the sun and views of the lake we also spotted some Cedar wax wings.



Lewiston Summer Fun and Films

Throughout the summer we participated in the Lewiston Summer Fun and Films series, hosted by Lewiston Police Department. We had activities like a pollution demonstration, hands-on water testing, painting, and coloring. Many people stopped by and answered the question: What does Lake Auburn mean to you?

- Clean Water and Natural Habitat
- Good Fishing and Clean Drinking Water
- Safe and clean drinking water for the animals and us, Safe and clean drinking water for kids like us to drink
- The Water. Lewiston and Auburn are twin cities so the water is ours too.
- Squirrel meat, potential deer meat
- I like good water



Lewiston Sprouts

Lewiston Sprouts is a new community program by Maine Audubon, Maine Community Integration, and Healthy Homeworks. This 5-week summer program promoted environmental stewardship and outdoor confidence in Lewiston youth. This trip included a discussion about careers and pathways in environmental stewardship, women in STEM, stewardship and Lewiston drinking water, a treatment plant tour, a pollution demonstration, and testing out aquascopes on Lake Auburn.



Photo credits: Maine Audubon and Maine Community Integration

Townsend Brook Trail Updates:

The Townsend Brook Trail, formally known as the Tot Lot Project has been making lots of progress the past few months. With the help of Edward Little High School Students, we were able to clear the first section of the path in the spring.

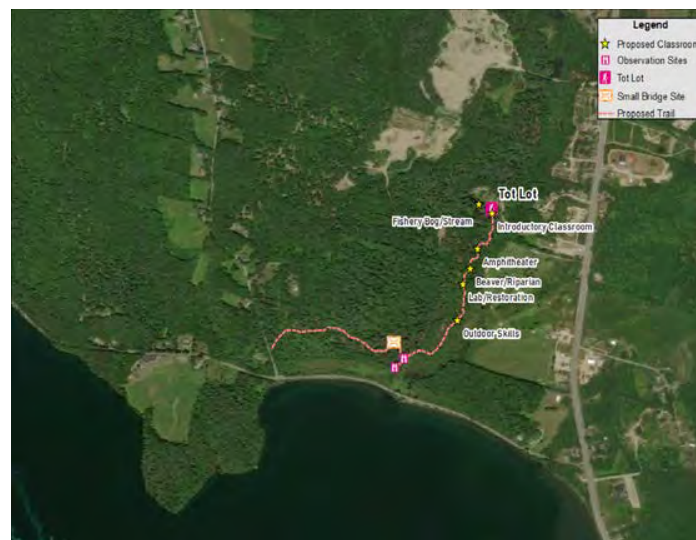
Townsend Brook is going to be an environmental educational trail in Auburn. This will be accomplished in a few different ways. This trail will have permanent informational signs along the trail educating about different parts of the ecosystem like native plants, stream buffers, wildlife, wetlands, and more, and connecting them back to water quality. There will also be smaller signs with QR codes that can take you to additional information and resources. Signs like this allow everyone to casually learn more about the watershed and the importance of land conservation.



Something that Townsend Brook will provide that many other LAWPC trails lack, is a place to gather. Townsend Brook will have 2 open areas large enough for a group to get together. This opens up the opportunities for classes or groups to do hands-on environmental science learning, to spend some time outside in a non-traditional classroom setting, or to have a place in nature to gather and relax. The vegetation in these areas were already very open, the whole trail is based off the natural features of the landscape and minimizing any impact to the land.



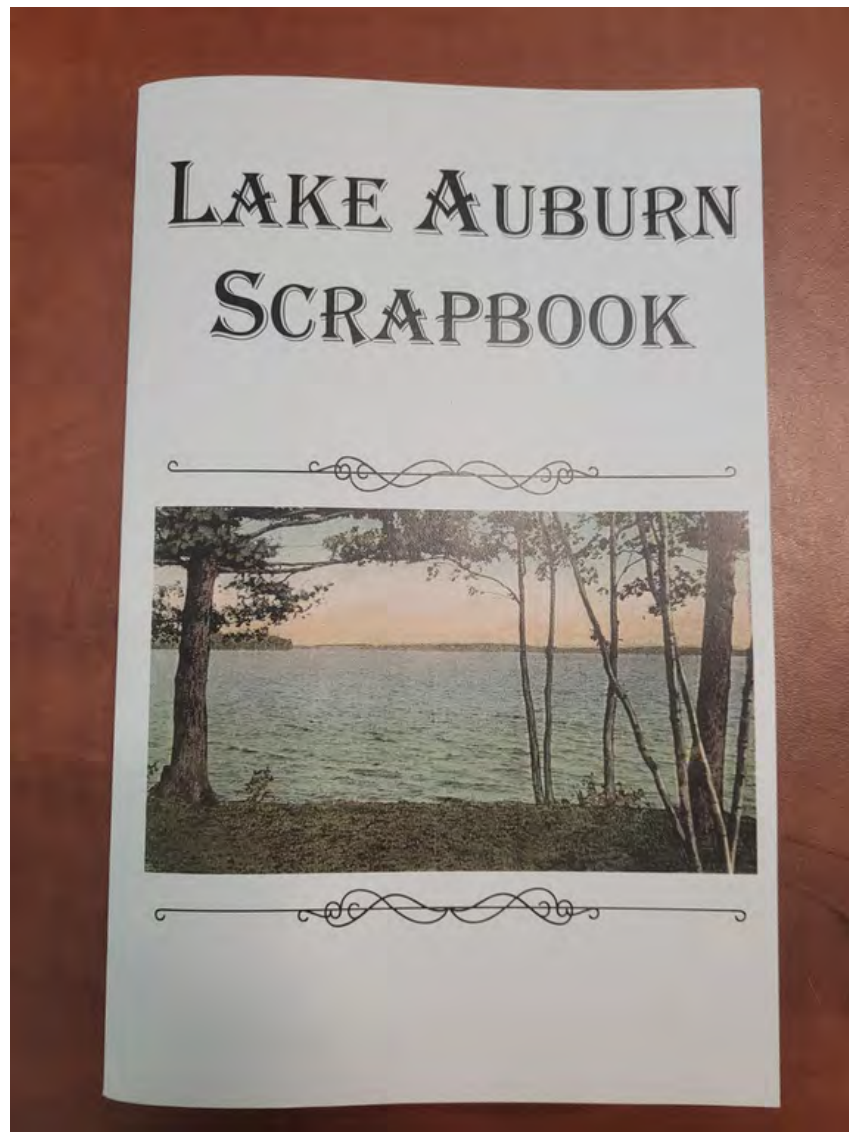
A larger component of this trail is to have a connecting accessible trail. There is an old logged path parallel to the foot path. Our goal is to have that path cleared to accessibility standards with an offshoot leading to the first gathering area. Then about two-thirds down the property, have the two trails merge to make one accessible trail to the end where the last gathering area is. We are committed to making sure everyone feels welcome to the conversation and has access to clean water, time outdoors, and environmental education.



Draft map of the walking path for Townsend Brook Trail

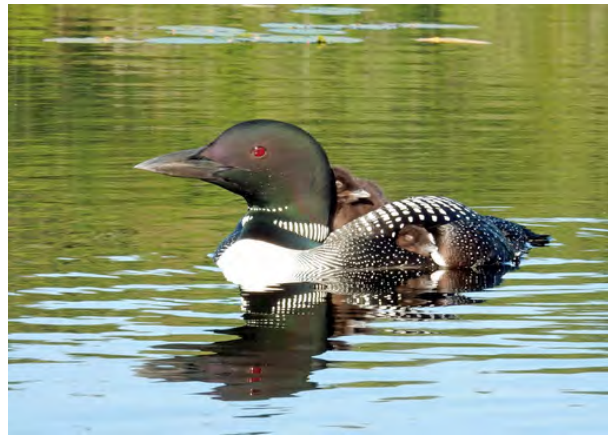
Lake Auburn Scrapbook

Pam Rousseau has created and published the Lake Auburn Scrapbook. While this is not affiliated with the Lake Auburn Watershed Protection Commission, it contains a rich compilation of the history of Lake Auburn. The Androscoggin Historical Society is providing them with a minimum \$10 donation.



Protecting Wildlife in the Watershed

The Lake Auburn Watershed is filled with diverse wildlife. There are slugs doing hard work that often go unseen, there are fisher cats foraging for berries and small mammals, there are turkey and deer that can be found crossing the street on the way to work, there are foxes planning out their next hunt, and many more animals in and around Lake Auburn. Here are a few active ways to protect the wildlife.



1. Stay on marked trails and designated parking areas

Staying on marked trails and designated parking areas minimizes habitat destruction or disruption. Straying off a trail to look at something, or parking in an unauthorized location because it is more convenient, can have immediate negative impacts such as trampling over a chipmunk burrow or running over a turtles nest. These actions can also cause erosion over a longer period of time which can degrade the overall quality of habitats and the environment.

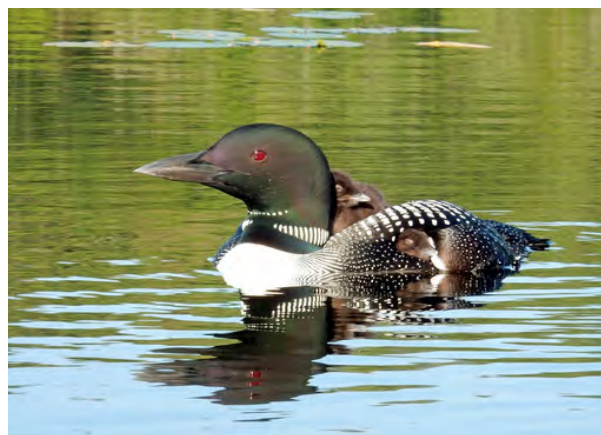
2. Carry-in Carry-out

Litter is one of the easiest forms of pollution to prevent yet it is one of the most common forms of pollution. Trash that is left out in nature can harm animals if they ingest it or if the trash disrupts their habitat. Plastic is not broken down by nature, instead it just breaks down into smaller pieces called micro plastics. Microplastics are often eaten by animals mistaking them for food sources, and then ingested by predators of those animals. Help prevent pollution in wildlife and the watershed by making sure you carry out all items that you carried into the trail or recreation area.



3. Fish Lead Free

Lead poisoning is a leading cause of death in adult Common Loons and waterfowl. By ingesting fishing gear with lead that has been left behind, the birds end up poisoning themselves. "To protect loons and other wildlife, Maine state law bans the use and sale of lead sinkers and bare (unpainted) lead-headed jigs that weigh one ounce or less, or that measure 2 ½ inches or less." (Maine Audubon). Find out if your gear has lead in it with the flowchart by Loon Safe on the next page. If it does, visit the Maine Audubon site to find a local waste station, or fishing gear exchange program. While lead from fishing gear does not have a significant impact on fish or water quality, the health of everything in the ecosystem is important to think about while fishing and recreating.





How to tell if your fishing tackle contains lead (Pb)



Is your tackle painted or covered by another coating such as a rubber skirt?

Coatings on lead tackle DO NOT protect loons from lead poisoning. Coatings are quickly eroded by the grinding of the loon's digestive system, and the lead in the tackle is absorbed into the loon's bloodstream.

Did you know? New Hampshire law bans the sale and freshwater use of lead fishing sinkers and jigs weighing one ounce or less (lead poisoning from ingestion of this tackle is the #1 cause of adult loon mortality in NH). Whereas our laws have led the nation in protecting loons and other wildlife from lead, becoming stronger over time, the **date of purchase can be used to estimate the likelihood that fishing tackle bought here (if weighing one ounce or less) contains lead.**

Date Purchased	2016-Present	2010-2015	2000-2010	Pre-2000
Likelihood of Lead Content	Low	Moderate	High	Very High



If in Doubt... Please Take it Out (of your tackle box)!

Loon Preservation Committee's LoonSafe Initiative includes a Lead Tackle Buyback Program that will give you a ten-dollar voucher to spend on new gear at participating local tackle shops when you trade in one ounce or more of banned lead tackle.* If you simply want to dispose of your lead tackle for proper recycling, LPC and partners have established disposal sites throughout the state. See www.loonsafe.org for locations.

*One trade-in voucher per customer per season. Other terms and conditions apply.
 View full details, additional offers, & participating retailers at:

[HTTPS://LOONSAFE.ORG](https://loonsafe.org)

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Commission 268 Court Street

Auburn, ME 04210



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

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