



# FRIENDS OF PONTOOSUC LAKE

## NEWSLETTER

May 2011

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### **ANNUAL MEETING AT ITAM LODGE** **TUESDAY, MAY 31 at 7:00 P. M.**

The annual meeting of The Friends of Pontoosuc will be held Tuesday, May 31. The agenda will feature reports on what is being done and needs to be done to protect and preserve our lake. Topics will include herbicide results and plans, water chestnut

control, Zebra mussel threat, lake level control, the annual drawdown, and others.

All are invited to attend. Bring any questions or concerns you have about the care and management of Pontoosuc Lake and Watershed, and the operation of our lake association.

### **LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT**

Hello to all the Friends of Pontoosuc. The officers and directors are working hard to protect and preserve Pontoosuc Lake. This letter is a brief overview of our activities and challenges. Please provide feedback and any help you can.

made at the annual town meeting. There is a distinct possibility that the lake program will not be funded for 2012. Lanesborough voters, please attend the Town meeting, Tuesday June 14 at the Lanesborough school, and support our budget request. We need your yes vote.

#### **CONTROL OF INVASIVE PLANTS**

The 2010 herbicide program was done by Aquatic Control Technology (ACT), and will be done by them again in 2011. See Gordon's article below for details. The program is funded jointly by Pittsfield and Lanesborough, splitting the cost 50:50. The money has been appropriated by both the City and the Town in their respective fy2011 budgets for the summer 2011 work.

The herbicide control of invasive plants has been more effective than the harvesting program preceding it but it has not been perfect. There has been some regrowth of Eurasian Milfoil in late summer and the European Naiad isn't controlled by the herbicide because it starts its growth after the treatment. The deep drawdown planned for 2011-12 will help check the milfoil regrowth in areas less than 6 feet deep which will help somewhat. Options for better control are:

ACT was the low bidder for the 2012-2014 contract with a cost of just under \$20,000. We therefore requested \$10,000 each from Lanesborough and Pittsfield in the fy2012 budgets for the summer of 2012. The Lanesborough 2012 budget is very tight, and the decisions on what gets funded will be

- Re-treat in late summer. This is expensive and there is no money for it near term. It also requires closing the lake for a day at the height of the season.
- Hand-pull the stubborn root structures in areas where regrowth occurs.

*(letter cont.)*

- Treat with a systemic herbicide. This is very expensive and most options are not appropriate for Pontoosuc Lake for a variety of reasons.

We will discuss this topic in detail at the annual meeting. Bring your thoughts and questions. We welcome your feedback about where and when plant growth is not controlled well enough. Please be specific about where, when, and if known, the species.

## **DRAWDOWN**

The recommended practice for lakes in our region is to draw down at least 3 feet every year and to do a 6 foot drawdown every three years. The 5 foot drawdown we did when the dam was replaced in 2005-6 was very effective at reducing weeds in the exposed lake bottom areas, although weeds did grow back by mid-summer. We were doing mechanical harvesting then, which spreads fragments and probably contributed to the rapid re-growth in the areas exposed by the deep drawdown. Now that we are not harvesting, the deep drawdown should be even more effective.

We are applying for a permit to do a deep drawdown approximately every three years. There are multiple interests in how the outflow from the dam is managed; summer recreational users, winter recreational users, fishing interests, and those concerned with the ecology of the outflow stream. We must balance these interests in managing the dam. Rather than to adhere to an every third year schedule we will request flexibility, so we can adapt to variations in rainfall, and do the deep drawdown when conditions are right. Partial refill to the -3 foot level in late winter will be proposed to ensure that we can refill the lake in the spring without severely impacting the ecology of the downstream environment. This will impact winter activities on the lake, as a partial refill in January will cause problems for access to the ice. As I said, there are multiple interests, and we need to make decisions which take all interests into account. We welcome input

and help from all summer lake users, winter lake users, environmental advocates, sportspeople, and all others.

We are meeting with the various regulatory agencies now and will go before a joint Lanesborough-Pittsfield Conservation Commission meeting in late summer.

## **ZEBRA MUSSELS**

This invasive is a very serious threat to Pontoosuc, and we have been disappointed in the response of the Commonwealth as described in Jack's article below. We need your help in informing all users of our lake what they need to do to prevent the spread.

There are two items of good news however. The DCR has provided grant funding to Pittsfield to hire two boat ramp monitors (in lieu of the DCR monitors hired last year) and the City will supplement this money and hire two more. So, as last year, there will be 2 full-time monitors for each lake (Pontoosuc and Onota). Jim McGrath will run the program. Even with two full-time monitors there will be gaps in coverage at critical times and we will again be asking for volunteers to fill these gaps.

The other good news is that the DCR will be installing and staffing a boat wash at Laurel Lake to decontaminate boats as they leave the lake. This would not have happened without the determined efforts of the President of LAPA West (our own Jack Hickey) and Tom Flannery of DCR. The staffing schedule for this boat wash has not been determined, but there will be times when the wash is not operational so our lakes will still be at risk from boats contaminated at Laurel Lake.

## **NEWSLETTERS**

This is our spring newsletter which we send via USPS mail to our extended list of interested supporters. We also send brief e-mail newsletters on topics of interest as they arise. We have over 700 contacts on our mail list, but only have e-mail for about 150. We will send this to both. If you only get the postal service version and would like to be on our e-mail distribution list, please contact us to be included. We need help

(letter cont.)

generating and editing newsletters. Please contact us if you can help as we need to be doing a better job of keeping all lake people informed.

### **OTHER PROJECTS**

Additional activities which we performed last year and will continue in the future are:

- Implementation of our watershed management plan
- Annual Lake clean-up in the spring to remove trash from the shore and the water.
- Hand-pull water chestnuts to control this very invasive species.

- Water quality sampling and lake weed surveys to monitor the health of the lake.

The Friends of Pontoosuc Lake is a volunteer organization. We welcome your participation. Our goal is to protect and preserve the Lake and to ensure that the public can enjoy a variety of recreational activities. Please join us at our annual meeting.

Lee Hauge,  
President

## **HERBICIDE TREATMENT RESULTS AND PLANS**

We now have now completed three years of Herbicide Treatment and the overall results are quite good. The 2009/10 treatment by Aquatic Control Technology, (ACT), was very good with only three small spots of excessive growth, which easily met the contract guarantee of 85% weed free. ACT used the herbicide, Reward, to control the Eurasian Milfoil, (*Myriophyllum Spicatum*), and Curly Leaf Pondweed, (*Potamogeton Crispus*). The May treatment of the lake using the herbicide, Reward, will be the standard for the foreseeable future. ACT now has the contract through 2014 since they won the new three year contract issued this spring.

Again I am sure you have noticed that the clarity of the water is better and there are no weeds on the surface or floating on the surface. As usual a Macrophyte survey was done in July confirming that the Milfoil and Curly leaf was gone except for a few plants widely dispersed, and except for the three small spots. Several native plants were growing like Coontail, Water Celery, Pondweed, and a new native Richardson's Pondweed. The August survey again showed an increase of European Pondweed, (*Najas Minor*), in Gunn's cove and in the northwest corner of the lake. This was expected and

can be dealt with by making spot treatments with Reward depending on availability of money. The surveys showed that the invasive plants were not severe enough to call for follow up treatment.

ACT joined with us for the August survey and concurred with our findings.

We are preparing for the 2011 season by doing an early May spot survey, and working with ACT to pick a May date that is timely, allowing the herbicide, Reward, to be most effective in giving us a result as good as or better than last year.

As required by law volunteers from the Friends of Pontoosuc will post the following signs around the lake notifying everyone about the day of treatment:

# WARNING

THIS POND WAS TREATED  
FOR NUISANCE AQUATIC  
VEGETATION

ON: TO BE DETERMINED DEP File #263-907

*ITS USE IS RESTRICTED FOR:*

IRRIGATION : 10 DAYS

SWIMMING: 1 DAY

DRINKING : 3 DAYS

FISHING: 1 DAY

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:  
Lycott Environmental, Inc. (508) 765-0101

*(herbicide cont.)*

Boating, fishing, and swimming will not be allowed the day of treatment. The lake will be patrolled to instruct any one who may not have seen the signs, and as in the past we expect everyone to be cooperative.

Since, Reward, is a contact herbicide it does not kill the roots but curtails the growth, and some treatment will be needed each year. If you should be using lake water to irrigate your lawn or garden, note that you should not use the water for ten days allowing the, Reward, to biodegrade.

Gordon E. Zaks FOP/W clerk

## **ZEBRA MUSSELS**

To keep the dreaded Zebra Mussels out of Pontoosuc Lake will take the cooperation and help from all "Friends". Over the winter Lee and I worked with the state's Zebra Mussel Task Force (ZMTF). Although we took strong exception to the reopening of Laurel Lake to daily boat traffic we did find that much of the information, in the report, on subjects like boat washing, signage etc. is well crafted and beneficial to all boaters. Taskforce recommendations addressed key issues related to the prevention of the spread of zebra mussels including education and decontamination.

However, additional challenges still must be addressed, such as control of zebra mussels at Laurel Lake, expanded monitoring, potential lake closures, and requiring proof of decontamination. Lee and I also urged that the ZMTF be reconvened in the fall to review the results from this summer's activities and to propose a path forward for future years.

We are not satisfied that the ZMTF members received a complete exposure to all of the scientific information currently available. We are currently recommending that a peer review be conducted of the scientific decisions associated with the state's "do nothing" approach to Laurel Lake. Taskforce conclusions were based on input from one or two state scientists, without calling upon the vast store of professional knowledge which is available in both academia and in the private sector in Massachusetts. Given the critical nature of the decisions being made, reliance on only one or two technical staff based in

particular agencies with their individual missions is neither appropriate nor adequate.

We strongly believe that the Laurel Lake boat ramp should be closed during the hours when monitors are not present at the boat ramp. While some may view the spread of zebra mussels to other water bodies in the Berkshires as being inevitable, we feel that it is a logical and legal management practice to attempt to seal off the one lake suffering from an infestation in an attempt to reduce that threat. If additional infestations of zebra mussels are discovered, infested lakes should immediately be closed and quarantined until proper measures can be put in place.

A strongly enforced monitoring program for much of the boating hours in the upcoming season, and closure of the state ramp during times the monitors are not present, provides a significant opportunity for continued public access to this lake. Absent the closure during non-monitored hours, the boat ramp should be closed for the season as it was last year under the State's emergency powers to prevent the spread of a nuisance. Public access to a Great Pond would still remain through the two public beaches and use of the boat ramp area for fishing.

Efforts should be taken to control zebra mussels within Laurel Lake. DFG have announced a 5 year study of Laurel Lake and we support it. But if the proposed five year study monitoring biological resources at Laurel Lake is to do nothing for 5 years then it is a serious mistake. Doing nothing until completing the study might appear on the surface to be the conservative

(zebra cont.)

approach of “first, do no harm” but in reality in this instance doing nothing significantly increases the likelihood that great harm will be done to other Berkshire lakes by infected boats coming from Laurel. Therefore steps to control zebra mussels and boating

activities within the Lake should be taken in parallel with the study. It is critical that we do not wait until the study is complete before taking steps to address the problem within the lake.

Jack Hickey

## **LANESBOROUGH BY-LAW FOR DOCKS, RAFTS, AND MOORINGS**

A by-law will be on the warrant for the annual Lanesborough Town meeting on June 14. Text of the by-law is available on the Town website. A similar by-law was proposed in 2005 but rejected and sent back for “further study”. The controversy was and still is about use of rights-of-way for “private” docks. A committee representing competing interests met several times last fall and developed compromise language which we believe protects the interests of all parties. The language in the right-of-way section of the by-law is below:

- At a wide right-of-way (20 feet or more) docks must be no closer than 5 feet from abutter property line. At a narrow right-of-way they may be located at the property line.
- No boat may be berthed overnight at the dock on a narrow right-of-way.
- The owner of the right-of-way must give permission for installation.

- If the Town is the owner of the right-of-way, then the Harbormaster may provide owner permission.
- The dock, raft, or mooring shall not interfere with the lake access by others who have the right to use the right-of-way.
- A dock or raft on a right-of-way must be shared with others who have use of the right-of-way. It is recommended that the applicant solicit interest from others who use the right-of-way, and enlist their help in designing and building the dock or raft.

Lanesborough residents with an interest in this should get a copy of the full warrant for review and attend the town meeting to vote yea or nay. Contact me if you have concerns and would like help in proposing modifications.

Lee Hauge

**SPRING LAKE CLEAN-UP  
JUNE 3-5**

**CONTACT  
MICHELE RIVERS-MURPHY  
443-7881**

**YOUR HELP IS NEEDED**

**THE FRIENDS OF PONTOOSUC  
THANK**

**U-DRIVE BOAT RENTAL  
281-4196**

**FOR THEIR GENEROSITY IN  
PROVIDING PONTOON BOATS  
TO SUPPORT OUR WORK**



**FRIENDS OF PONTOOSUC**

Gordon Zaks, Clerk  
17 Narragansett Ave  
Pittsfield, MA 01201-1021

**2011 ANNUAL MEETING  
FRIENDS OF PONTOOSUC  
TUESDAY MAY 31 7:00 PM  
ITAM LODGE on the lake**

**GET AN UPDATE ON STATUS OF THE LAKE,  
HERBICIDE WEED CONTROL RESULTS AND PLANS,  
DRAWDOWN PLANS, WATER QUALITY, AND MORE**