



BELGRADE REGIONAL CONSERVATION ALLIANCE

BRCA News ~ Spring 2006

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Many Ways to Support BRCA

Cash gifts are always welcome, and are tax-deductible. You can now donate by credit card on our web site at belgradelakes.org.

A gift of **appreciated stock** to BRCA can bring extra benefits to you—you get a charitable deduction, and you pay no capital gains tax.

If you have a **life insurance policy** that you no longer need, consider making BRCA the beneficiary. The value of the paid-up portion of the policy is tax-deductible.

Gift memberships not only help BRCA by expanding the number of people we reach, but also involves your recipients in this worthwhile effort.

Remember BRCA in **your will**: leave a legacy of protecting the lakes, lands, and wildlife of the Belgrade Lakes.

Belgrade Watershed On High Alert

Commissioners Achieve Status Quo at Route 27 Ramp

The controversial Route 27 boat launch site in Belgrade will remain open, despite proof that 46 percent of boats exiting Messalonskee Lake at this site carry plant fragments and a continuing public outcry over the state's inability to act on the issue. The government's latest stumble took center stage at the open February meeting of the Commissioners of Environmental Protection (DEP), Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (DIFW), and Conservation (DOC), where 2006 management policy for the ramp was set.

Public comment at the commissioners' meeting weighed in favor of closing the ramp, but also illustrated sharp disagreement among stakeholders. In the end, votes by the two agencies whose "mission is to provide access" overcame DEP Commissioner David Littell's call to close Route 27 to motorized craft. DOC Commissioner McGowan's good faith effort to locate an alternate ramp site is welcome and encouraging. Nevertheless, the threat remains.

The BRCA Milfoil Committee deplors the state's inaction, which condemns the other lakes in our watershed to unacceptably high jeopardy. We, who volunteer to protect these ponds, bear the unenviable burden of attempting to warn all boaters using five very popular, highly accessible lakes about the impending hazard of plant transfer from Route 27. While we have been able to mount a vigorous defense (6,954 inspections and six plant surveys at access sites in 2005), invasive plants possess

the advantage because ramps can't be monitored 24-seven. The committee believes that if motorized boats continue to use the Route 27 site, it will be only a matter of time before one or more of Messalonskee's sister lakes catches her contagion. If these destination lakes succumb to infestation, the level of danger for all lakes will mount.

DEP money to educate the public and prevent and control infestations is lessened by the administration's inaction because it's DEP that pays the bill for inspections at Route 27. DEP's share of Lake and River Protection Sticker funds is fixed at 60 percent, and has remained flat since the program began. At the same time, costs for personnel and plant management are rising, thus putting the squeeze on its funds for essential public education and prevention. In 2005, it cost DEP \$18,997, or \$27 per boater, to monitor Route 27. That equates to nine and a half Cost Share Grants, the funds that provide seed money for inspections.

The bottom line is clear. When constituencies disagree, our government can't make policy. The standoff at Route 27 will continue until leadership addresses the polarization between lake users. In the meantime, invasive plants will enjoy the advantage. Maine's failure of policy represents a huge step backwards for all who value her lakes, streams, and rivers. —*Maggie Shannon, Chair, BRCA Milfoil Committee*

Collaboration Seeks Stronger Watershed Protection

Representatives of the five area lake associations and BRCA have been meeting since last October in order to strengthen cooperative action to protect the Belgrade Lakes watershed. The Belgrade Collaborative Working Group has since set goals for increasing public participation and lake association capacity in order to increase Belgrade's competitiveness for federal and other funding and to pay for administrative support.

The working group will be publishing a business plan so members of each participating organization will be informed about goals, objectives, activities, and funding. The group's facilitator, Brenda Zollitsch, has already begun to seek foundation support for the initial phase of the project. For more information on this collaboration contact Maggie Shannon at msshannon@adelphia.net.

From the Executive Director

Sacred Elements Remain Sacred Today

Earth, air, fire, and water—these were the sacred elements that the ancient Greeks and Romans thought made up all things. Far simpler than our world of DNA, mesons, muons, and other sub-atomic particles! Perhaps those thinkers of long ago were on to something, because even today these items remain important to us.

Fire to warm us on a cold winter day. The fire of the sun to warm the Earth in spring. The fire of the sun to overheat the earth because of damage to our air.

Air—we breathe it and mistreat it to our peril, loading it up with CO₂ and causing global warming. Or putting chemicals into the atmosphere that then remove its protective capacity, causing skin cancers.

Water—the lakes we love but

mistreat with run-off from around our houses and off our streets. These nutrients feed the algae that turn our lakes to green soup, harming fish and native plants. Or we insult the waters by dumping our sewage outfalls and industrial leftovers (supposedly cleaned-up, but rarely pure) into streams, wetlands, and estuaries. All this injury is less than before, but more than 40 percent of the surface waters of the United States are still un-fishable and un-swimmable after 25 years of the Clean Water Act.

Finally, **Earth**—the soils that wash into our waters and cause such damage, either by feeding algae or silting up the waters and smothering plants and animals. We dose it with chemicals and herbicides and expect it to produce healthy food.

Earth, air, fire, and water. These elements were sacred to the peoples of the ancient world. They, or similar constructs, are sacred to primitive peoples the world over. Perhaps it is time that we recognized their sacredness again. BRCA is working to protect, conserve, and restore the earth and water of the Belgrade Lakes Region. Won't you help us in this sacred task?

Whether in the philosophy of the ancient Greeks and Romans, or in the Hebrew Bible (where the Lord made Adam *steward* over the lands and animals), our world *is* sacred. Let's keep it holy and whole.



Mike Little

Eddie Mayer

After I agreed to write a piece remembering Eddie Mayer, who passed away last year, I wondered what I would say that wasn't already fairly common knowledge. Once I started thinking about it the problem became where to stop.

I first met Eddie in the mid-'70s when I wanted to participate in renovating the Belgrade Lakes School into the Health Center. I was directed to Eddie who was coordinating that effort. I found my way down his drive over the "thank-you-ma'ams" (for the sensation you have when you go over them), which I now recognize as erosion control water bars. Long before the rest of us realized the need Eddie and his wife, Kay, already kept their entire lot as a buffer with a winding mulched path to the lake as well. When Eddie then offered one of his homebrewed beers to me he won my heart—okay, it does take more than that.

Eddie's commitment to water quality and his long involvement in the Belgrade Lakes Association is well known, as is his legendary record of 517 water quality readings for the Volunteer Lake Monitoring Program. But, when first approached with the idea of a local land trust, Eddie was skeptical that it would benefit the area. Once he became convinced that development pressures *did* threaten our lakes he began work in his usual quiet, behind-the-scenes manner toward that effort too, playing an enormous role in the acquisitions of The Mountain and The Kennebec Highlands.

What is less known about Kay and Eddie is that they were, unlike "summer folks," year-round residents and contributing members of the Rome community. Eddie researched and drafted Rome's first subdivision ordinance that served us well for many years, as well as gravel pit and commercial development ordinances, which we were not successful in getting approved at that time. The Mayers returned early that year to participate in the special Town Meeting at which the matter was decided however.

Eddie, for all of these reasons as well as your pragmatic approach to any problem and your steady friendship, we will miss you. —Denny Phillips



Secure the future of the BRCA legacy

When BRCA recently adopted its Strategic Plan, we re-stated our commitment to take care of our conservation lands in perpetuity. We need to make sure there will be a stable financial base to support monitoring, taxes, and other stewardship needs.

Eddie Mayer was someone who recognized the importance of land conservation and who was a real friend to BRCA. With his passing, we received gifts in his name and decided this was the time to establish an endowment fund to ensure that the basic needs of stewardship will always be supported.

If you want to contribute to the long-term protection of your BRCA legacy, consider a gift in honor of Eddie or another special person. Give the BRCA office a call if you would like to know more about options for giving to BRCA.

A Visit to Round Pond

One of BRCA's emphases has been preserving water quality and habitat. There are many ways to do this, but land conservation is one of the surest ways. This is especially true if the body of water is special and we can safeguard the entire watershed, like Round Pond in the Kennebec Highlands. Every pond or lake is special to somebody: to me Round Pond is a special place.

One day this winter I needed a break and decided to take a walk with the dog. Walking up the newly rebuilt Sanders Hill Trail off Watson Pond Road, I cut through the woods to Round Pond. I found a friend and his dog there and while the dogs got reacquainted, he showed me his new skates (this guy has *all* the toys!) and he told me what the pond means to him. He's coming back to live in the area, in part because of the Kennebec Highlands and Round Pond.

As you might expect, the water quality in Round Pond is quite good and it is fairly clear. A high flushing rate from the stream and an intact watershed with little disturbance means it has low nutrients and not much algae. Like most area ponds, it is only weakly colored from the wetland plants along its edge and upstream and its acidity is pretty well neutral. Sometimes small, relatively deep ponds get so warm on the surface that their bottom water is isolated leading to low oxygen and fish stress. Round Pond has just enough oxygen in late summer, a plus for fish. It's not uncommon in winter to find evidence of a lone fisherman who's drilled a few holes and spent some quiet hours looking up at Round Top.

This little 10-acre gem is about 16 feet deep and has water cold enough in summer to support trout, though the habitat is limited. The Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife conducted a fish survey in 2005 and found white suckers, pumpkinseed, and other minnows. Unfortunately they did not find the trout they expected from fishermen's

reports. Instead they found largemouth bass. Bass were introduced illegally, and it's likely that the absence of trout is due to competition with bass. Though the brook that flows into the pond supports trout, it is probable that whatever trout would have survived in the pond are preyed on by bass, another loss for anglers who have precious few trout waters in the region. It's also another example of the problems caused by people who take it on themselves to decide what fish ought to be where. This problem of illegal stocking is an epidemic statewide and is causing habitat disruption and hurting native fisheries, as well as being illegal.

Round Pond is connected to Beaver Pond by a beautiful stream that is fun to float in the summer (if you work hard enough to haul a light canoe in). It's also great to walk in the winter and a good place for bird watching in the summer. We'll talk about Beaver Pond in another issue, but if you want to see that, walk around the east side of Round Pond, where you'll also find great boulders to sit on and enjoy the quiet. The stream begins in a really nice wetland and small flood plain that forms the west side of Round Pond. True to its name, that stream has ample evidence of beaver activity. If you go the other way, you'll encounter a pristine stream that tumbles over boulders and small waterfalls. The stream flows year round and has a large watershed, including McIntire and Kidder ponds. This stream makes a good bushwack walk if you want to explore a little! Or if you are ambitious, you can navigate southwest and climb the backside of Round Top. Make sure to bring along your Kennebec Highlands map from BRCA.

The varied shoreline means there's a home for a variety of animals and birds: a little something for everyone, including us humans. Take a stroll to Round Pond and see what I mean. —*Roy Bouchard*

Get Involved: Steward a Trail or Join Us for a Work Day

Springtime greetings everyone! The snow is fast melting, not that there was much of it, the temperatures are rising, the frogs are croaking. Spring has arrived. I'm looking forward to everything that the warm weather has to offer, well except maybe black flies. But before we discount the winter, I hope everyone had a chance to enjoy it as much as I did. Lots of hiking and it was a great season for ice riding on my mountain bike. I put many enjoyable miles of riding on Great Pond this year.

Unfortunately due to the timing and lack of snow we didn't get a chance to do the wildlife tracking

event this past winter. We'll try again next winter. Speaking of events we will be having a trail workday Saturday, May 6. The location of this one will be announced later. We will be having workdays throughout the summer; volunteers are always needed.

If you would like to steward a trail or piece of property, we still have parcels open for stewards. I will be creating an e-mail list of volunteers for workdays and such. Please e-mail me if you want to be included on that list. Also, if anyone is interesting in attending our stewardship meetings, they are scheduled for the first Tuesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. at the

BRCA office in Belgrade Lakes.

Some (as of yet) unscheduled events we are planning this year will be birding, mushroom, and ecology walks, outdoor education hikes, as well as some paddling trips. I'm also thinking of doing a tour of the old foundations that are scattered across the Kennebec Highlands. Contact me if you are interested in that. Call the office or myself for updates. If you want to be included on my events e-mail list or stewardship list just send me your address and I'll keep you posted. My e-mail is BrianA@gwi.net and phone is 397-4877. Hope to see you on the trail. —*Brian Alexander*



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Upcoming BRCA and conservation events

Trail Workdays

Saturday, May 6

Meeting location to be announced.

Other trail work days will be held through the summer. Contact Brian Alexander for more information on workdays and other stewardship events (397-4877 or BrianA@gwi.net).

Take a walk—take a float—with BRCA

From time to time we organize outdoors events and we'd like to include you! If you want to be notified of events as they are planned in 2006, please send an e-mail and your phone number to sueandroy@gwi.net. When we schedule something we'll let you know and you can decide if you want to come along. You can also be notified of trail workdays and other stewardship events by contacting Stewardship Chair, Brian Alexander, at BrianA@gwi.net or 207-397-4877.

BRCA's e-mail, Internet access, and Web site hosting are all donated to us, thanks to GWT's Charitable and Non-Profit program. For more information, visit www.gwi.net.



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