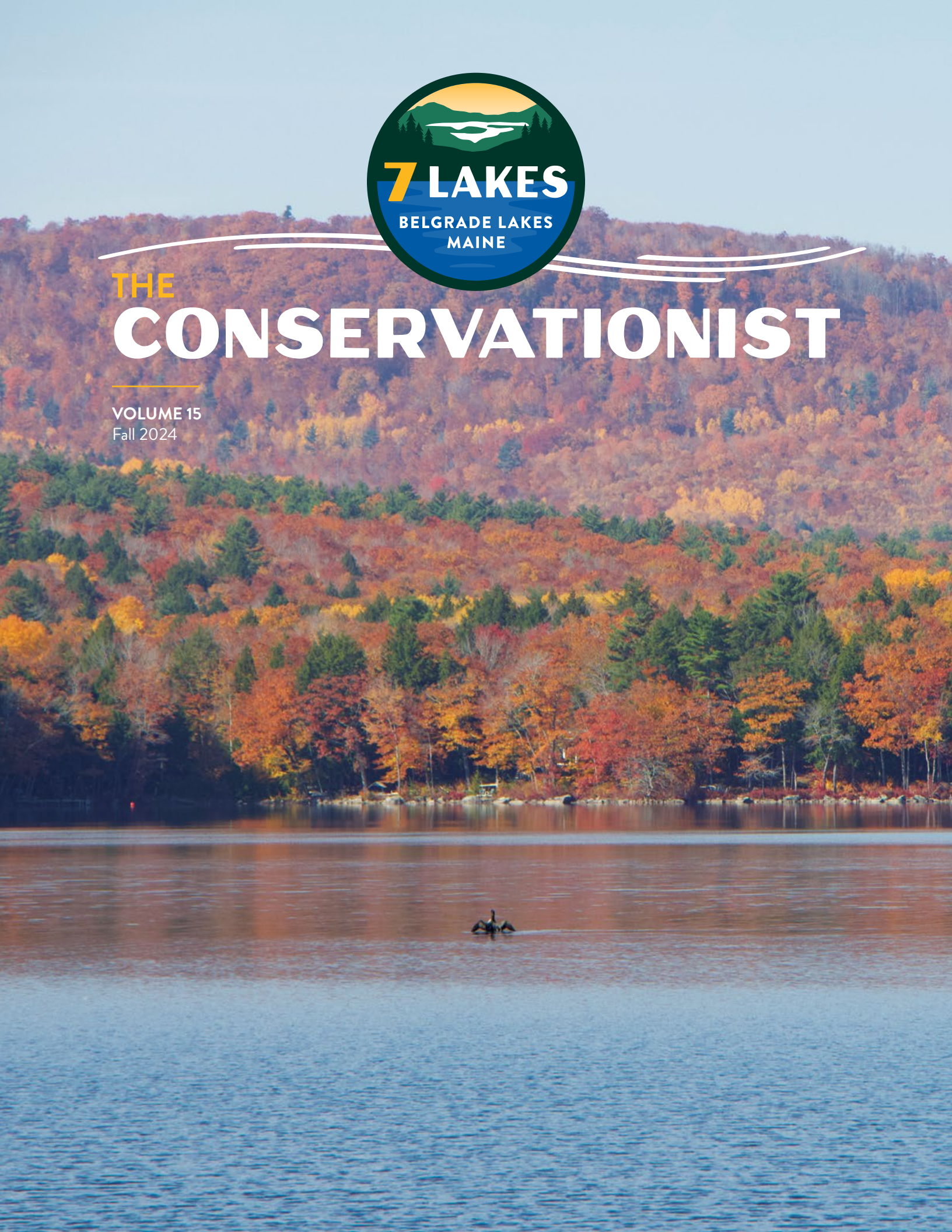

THE CONSERVATIONIST

VOLUME 15
Fall 2024

7 LAKES
BELGRADE LAKES
MAINE

OUR IMPACT 2024
YOUR DONATIONS AT WORK

LAND CONSERVATION

932 ADDITIONAL ACRES PROTECTED INCLUDING:

- Black Horse Acres Conservation Easement: 579 acres, 6 miles of streams, protects North Pond.
- Sandy Cove Uplands: 271 acres, 1.2 miles of streams, protects Long Pond.
- RoSabia Preserve: 83 acres including a Northern White Cedar Swamp.

LAND STEWARDSHIP

- 20 miles of trails stewarded & 118 hours of volunteer trail work. Created first universal access trail in Rome.
- Collaboration with the Maine Conservation Corps and the New England Mountain Bike Association to improve trails.
- First summer land stewardship intern from Colby College.

EROSION CONTROL

- Completed the East Pond Watershed Non-Point Pollution Survey.
- $1 million in federal 319 grants since 2018 for major erosion control projects.
- 15-person Youth Conservation Corps crew completed numerous projects on all 7 lakes.
- LakeSmart had a 30% increase in evaluations and 22 awards presented.

WATER QUALITY

- New full-time lake scientist, Matt Farragher.
- 266 site visits with 1956 lake samples and 156 stream samples collected.
- Surveyed 7 remote ponds near the Kennebec Highlands.
- Ongoing assessment and planning for North Pond Remediation Project, anticipated for 2025-2026.

INVASIVE AQUATICS

- Dive team located a new infestation of curly-leaf pondweed in North Pond and began removal operations. Removed curly-leaf pondweed from the Serpentine and Old Mill Stream which saw 89% & 100% reduction, respectively.
- Ongoing variable-leaf milfoil reduction in Great Pond.
- More than 12,500 boat inspections.

EDUCATION & OUTREACH

- Launched the floating classroom to provide educational programming throughout the watershed.
- Hosted more than 70 events with 1,000+ attendees.
- Collaborated with Camp Tracy, Camp Golden Pond and Camp Somerset.
- Initiated a Maine Master Naturalist program series.

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A LETTER FROM CHRIS MONZ, CEO

Chris Monz and wife Wyatt Lutsk

With the arrival of clear days and cool nights here in the Belgrade Lakes watershed comes the opportunity for all of us in the 7 Lakes Alliance community to reflect on another busy year of conservation work. Although I am still in my first year of work with the 7 Lakes Alliance, I am continually impressed by the dedication of our staff and Board of Directors and gratified by the degree of support from this community. This support is the engine that powers all the important year-round work we do to conserve our lakes and land. This time of year allows a look back at summer field work and the opportunity to glimpse ahead as we start planning for 2025. Of course, much of our work such as water quality testing, trail work and maintenance, and ecological monitoring of our preserves continues throughout the winter season.

In this issue of *The Conservationist*, we explore the many aspects of the fundamental connection between the land and the lakes. I had many opportunities to experience this connection firsthand this summer, as the long days provided opportunities for evening kayaking, trail running and hiking. So much of our conserved land lies in this important interface—wetlands on lakeshores that progress to upland forests. Preserving these areas supports many ecosystem services that minimize runoff, protect biodiversity, and ultimately protect water quality of the lakes that are so beloved in the Belgrade Lakes region.

Over my years in conservation work, I've served many roles—as a ranger/naturalist, outdoor educator, academic scientist and now as your President and CEO. I'm proud of the work we are accomplishing and energized to take on what lies ahead. All the work described in this newsletter demonstrates that the 7 Lakes Alliance has the science-based tools, team and momentum to continue to address the many pressures on our land and waters—work needed now more than ever. We thank you for your enduring support in our unyielding effort to achieve our mission: Conserving the lands and waters of the Belgrade Lakes region for all.

CHRIS MONZ
7 Lakes Alliance President and Chief Executive Officer

AT 7 LAKES ALLIANCE: CONSERVING THE LAND TO SUPPORT OUR LAKES

NOAH POLLOCK
7 Lakes Alliance Land Conservation Director

Protecting the land around us is one of 7 Lakes Alliance's primary tools for protecting the water quality of our lakes. Specifically, we recognize the importance of conserving headwater streams, wetlands, riparian and upland forests:

HEADWATER STREAMS are the "veins" of our watershed. When impacted, they carry sediments and pollutants straight into our lakes.

WETLANDS serve as nature's sponges, storing and cleaning stormwater before slowly releasing clean water.

RIPARIAN FORESTS act as critical buffers between developed areas and our lakes. Natural duff layers (leaves and mulch) and vegetation help slow stormwater run-off, provide critical wildlife habitat, and cool the waters.

UPLAND FORESTS temper storm impacts, slowing down the flows of water. Unsustainable development and heavy logging contribute to intense run-off events which increase erosion and add pollutants to our waters.

IN JULY 2024, 7 LAKES ALLIANCE AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY WORKED TOGETHER TO PURCHASE A 270-ACRE PARCEL OFF DUNN ROAD TO HELP SAFEGUARD LONG POND'S WATER QUALITY. The undeveloped property, situated to the east of Sandy Cove, is one of the largest in the Town of Belgrade. It has no paved roads or buildings, 1.2 miles of streams, and 17 acres of wetlands. It protects water quality, provides wildlife habitat, offers peace, quiet, and a dark night sky. Unfortunately, it had been over-harvested and was being marketed to developers, with a high risk of subdivision. With the help of the community, we permanently protected the property and are now working on a management plan to reforest the land as a nature preserve, safeguarding open space, clean water, and wildlife habitat for future generations.

With the support of the local community, including generous support from residents of Sandy Cove, 7 Lakes quickly raised the needed funds and purchased this important 270-acre parcel. Thank you! An advisory committee, including local residents, is now developing a land management plan that will include strategies to restore a healthy forest and for public recreation, including tree plantings, new trails, and parking. Stay tuned!

For more information, contact:

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(207) 495-6839 x 101

PROTECTING THE SMALLER GEMS: PONDS OF THE BELGRADE LAKES WATERSHED

MATT FARRAGHER
7 Lakes Alliance Lake Scientist

Matt Farragher, Dan Woughter & Josie Miller surveying Beaver Pond

The Belgrade region is best known for its seven large lakes, but there are numerous streams and small ponds throughout the watershed that are also important. Even though these ponds are not visited as frequently as the large lakes by the public for recreation, they contribute to the overall health of the watershed. This fall, the Lake Science team at 7 Lakes assessed the water quality of seven ponds: McIntire, Watson, Ingham, Kidder, Whittier, Round, and Beaver. Except for Watson Pond, which was surveyed in 2014, these ponds had not been measured since 2004.

We turned our attention to these remote ponds to answer a few principal questions: Are the ponds changing over time in the same way as the lakes? Will we see unique trends since the remote ponds are more protected from human impacts? Are there any endangered aquatic plant species present?

These alluring small ponds are upstream of several lakes (e.g. Round Pond drains into Beaver Pond, which drains into Long Pond), which means that they influence the water quality of those downstream lakes. With more knowledge of what's happening in the ponds, we can better understand our watershed as a whole.

Remote water bodies with less development serve lake researchers with valuable case studies to better understand the long-term effects of climate change. Compared to the frequent monitoring that we do on the large lakes, which give us a complete view of seasonal and annual water quality trends, a single survey will only give us a glimpse into a pond's ecosystem. However, an annual snapshot will still give us a better understanding of the long-term changes occurring in the ponds than once per decade.

We surveyed each pond just like we survey the lakes: measuring water clarity (Secchi disk depth), temperature, oxygen, nutrient and metal concentrations, and plankton communities. Some data has not yet been processed, but water clarity, temperature, and oxygen values are all very similar to what was seen ten or twenty years ago. Water clarity was low (between 7-12 ft.) on Ingham, McIntire, Round, & Whittier Ponds, due to dark brown water that is rich in iron and organic carbon; this is typical of small water bodies that are in close proximity to bogs and wetlands. Clarity was better in Kidder and Watson (18ft and 21ft, respectively). Most of these ponds were still thermally stratified late in the season (as of September 27th), with warm surface water, cool deeper water, and little or no oxygen in water below about 12 ft. By comparison, the shallow large lakes (North, East, McGrath) each have had uniform temperatures top to bottom, and have been fully oxygenated since mid- August. Our lake science team is working hard now to process and report the nutrient and biological data for all the lakes and ponds. These surveys will help us build an understanding of the current water quality status, and to maintain or improve their water quality through our conservation efforts.

Matt Farragher surveying on Watson Pond

Of the roughly 6,000 lakes in Maine, about half are smaller than 10 acres. Research in the last several decades has revealed that small ponds have relatively higher biodiversity than their larger counterparts. Small ponds are especially charismatic; high biodiversity makes them great for fishing, and their remote nature makes them a great destination for swimming, paddling, and enjoying nature. Continuing to steward and protect all the water bodies in the Belgrade Lakes watershed is a major goal of our organization, and we look forward to analyzing the data over the next few months and using what we learn to help conserve these beautiful ponds.



Left: Dive Crew on North Pond, **Center**: Brown slime smothering native large-purple bladderwort in Great Meadow Stream, **Right**: Brown slime coating native and invasive aquatic plants in Rome Trout Brook, Great Pond

REMOVING INVASIVE PLANTS IN NORTH POND: DIVING IN PEA SOUP

SHARON MANN *7 Lakes Alliance Invasive Aquatics Program Director*

By the second week of June, it was clear that the 7 Lakes Alliance's Invasive Aquatics Dive Crew was in for a tough season due to declining water quality in North Pond. Weeks before the lake officially turned green, the dive crew witnessed something they'd only read about in textbooks (in real life and in real-time!). While removing invasive curly-leaf pondweed from the bottom of North Pond, an ominous green cloud began to form around the divers. Unlike "metaphyton", another type of green cloud in the water you might see around docks and in shallow coves, the green cloud in North Pond had no edges- the entire bottom of the lake was covered in green.

On July 2nd, the Lake Science team confirmed via microscopy that the contents of the green cloud were Dolichospermum. Dolichospermum, the bloom-forming genus of cyanobacteria has been obscuring water clarity periodically in North Pond since 2018, and rests in lake sediments during the winter. As water temperature increases, Dolichospermum slowly rises in the water column towards sunlight by specialized gas vacuoles similar to swim bladders in a fish. Luckily the divers had removed a significant amount of curly-leaf pondweed prior to this official algae bloom.

Unfortunately, North Pond was not the only waterbody to suffer from excess algae this year. Large mats of pond scum lined the banks of East Pond's Serpentine stream, where 7 Lakes divers worked weekly from June to October. These mats obscured visibility and were physically exhausting to swim through—like a thick pea soup. In three milfoil-infested streams that drain into Great Pond (Rome Trout Brook, Robbins Mill Stream, and Great Meadow Stream), aquatic plants both native and invasive were coated in a thick brown slime for the majority of the season.

Luckily, our divers are used to working with little-to-no visibility underwater and can rely on touch to distinguish between native and invasive plants. For example, native hortwort has a firm and gritty texture while invasive variable leaf milfoil does not. Trout Brook in Rome was the most affected stream in Great Pond where the dive crew lost the ability to see with their hands due to the amount of slime stuck on submerged plants. No one could have mentally prepared the divers for the amount of slime coated on their faces, hands, and equipment due to algae growth this season.

While we are not certain why there was so much slime in the streams this year, higher than normal phosphorus concentrations from the increased stormwater runoff seems to be the culprit. When the land that abuts the water isn't properly taken care of, these situations are bound to occur. Overactive algae affect more aspects of lake life than what you can see from the surface.

Green slime might be fun for Nickelodeon but our vote is to keep it out of the water. Thankfully our colleagues at 7 Lakes on the Erosion Control team are working year-round to keep erosion and pollutants out of our lakes but there remains much to be done. Both large-scale 319 projects, such as culverts and bridges as well as smaller-scale YCC projects, such as buffer plantings can have a large collective impact. Of course everyone will need to do their part to keep erosion out of our lakes if we want to keep the pea soup off the menu in the Belgrade Lakes watershed.

INTERVIEW WITH SUMMER INTERN MILES HAGEDORN

Miles Hagedorn, Bates College Senior, Shares Highlights as a Summer Research Student with the 7 Lakes Alliance Lake Science Team

Miles Hagedorn sampling McIntire Pond in the Kennebec Highlands

What is your connection to the Belgrade Lakes? Has your family been coming here for a while?

My family has been coming to the Belgrade Lakes, specifically Long Pond, since the 1980s. Growing up fishing, paddling, and hiking in the Belgrade Lakes region has been a central part of my childhood and adult life.

What activities do you and your family enjoy while you're in town?

I am an avid kayak fisherman, mostly focusing on bass. I enjoy waking up early throughout the summer for some sunrise fishing. My family and I enjoy exploring the Belgrade Lakes region, hiking in the watershed, and paddling and swimming in Long Pond. We love coming into town to walk around and go to the farmers market on Sundays.

What work did you do this summer for 7 Lakes Alliance? What was your favorite part?

I worked as Lakes Science research assistant this summer for 7 Lakes Alliance. This work consisted of water sampling all seven of the Belgrade Lakes, along with processing samples and doing lab work. I focused on using 7 Lakes Alliance's FlowCam, classifying and identifying algae.

I enjoyed everything that I did this summer for 7 Lakes Alliance! If I had to pick one or two things that I enjoyed the most, they would be interacting with community members, discussing water quality with them, and getting to work on the water while helping protect the Belgrade Lakes!

How do you think land conservation around the watershed impacts the lakes?

Land conservation is deeply interconnected with lakes, and the Belgrade Lakes region is no exception. Conserving land within the watershed is essential for preserving the water quality of the seven lakes. Conserved and wild land provides a buffer to filter and retain runoff prior to it reaching the lakes. Runoff leads to declining water quality and severe events such as algal blooms. If we all want to continue to enjoy the beautiful lakes that we are so lucky to be surrounded by here, then land conservation must be a priority. Conserved land not only helps with water quality, it also provides habitat for wildlife and improves soil health, resulting in improved plant health and growth.

7 LAKES ALLIANCE'S YOUTH CONSERVATION CORPS REVITALIZES THREE COMMUNITY PARKS

This year, the Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) worked with the Towns of Belgrade and Rome to revitalize three community parks, providing public access for everyone to enjoy the waterfront.

Rome Town Beach following work by 7 Lakes

ROME TOWN BEACH: The Rome Town Beach suffered severe erosion after the storms of last December. To remedy this and prevent future erosion, 7 Lakes Alliance worked with the town, utilizing the YCC and leveraging funds from the Great Pond 319 grant to stabilize the shoreline with angular riprap. Since the riprap would have made it difficult for folks to enter the lake, we installed granite steps for easy access to the water. While onsite, the YCC took the opportunity to revitalize the old steps by replacing decomposing mulch with crushed stone, allowing water to infiltrate more effectively. Cedar platforms were then placed on top of the stone for improved walkability and stability without sacrificing permeability. Finally, to prevent erosion on land, we spread 32 cubic yards of mulch around the highly trafficked areas where soil had become exposed, including the pathways between the parking lot and the waterfront.

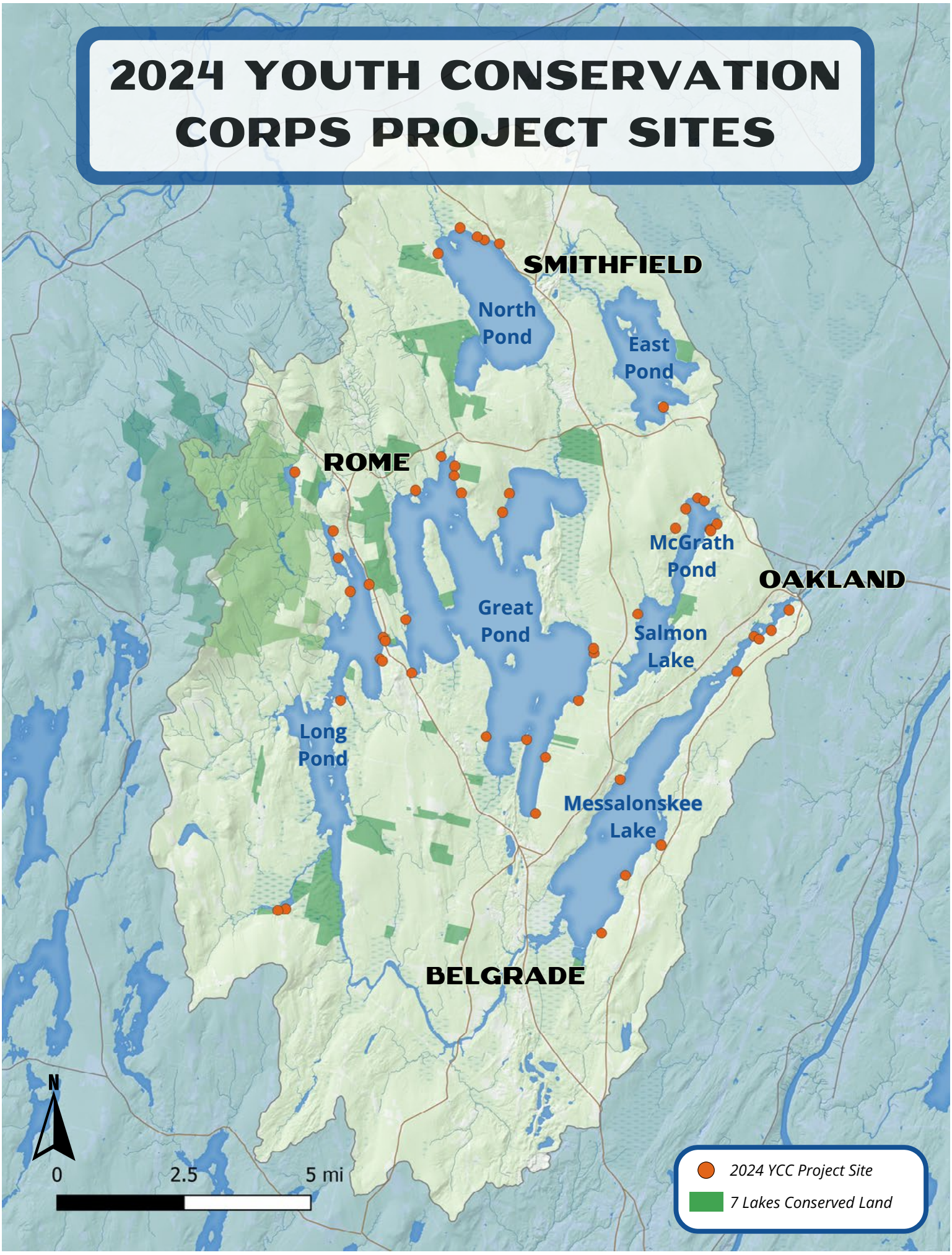
CENTER FOR ALL SEASONS: The Center for All Seasons was one of our final projects for the season, with several Best Management Practices (BMPs) installed here. A shoreline buffer was planted with blueberry bushes and creeping juniper. Similar to what was done at the Rome Town Beach, riprap was placed along the shoreline and granite steps were installed, providing easy water access while also maintaining the integrity of the shoreline. Erosion control mulch was placed above the riprap and around the plants to slow the flow of water into the lake and establish stable ground allowing the new plantings to thrive.

Stuart Cole and Dan MacGlashing, Town of Belgrade Recreation Director, standing at the new granite steps.

> **"This is the functional facelift the community needs!"**
>
> *—Dan MacGlashing, Town of Belgrade Recreation Director*

PENINSULA PARK: In 1996, the YCC conducted its first project at Peninsula Park in Belgrade. 28 years later, they planted a buffer garden consisting of 100 square feet of blueberry sod, 7 blueberry bushes, 3 daylilies, 3 hostas, and 12 junipers. Infiltration steps were installed connecting the parking lot to the newly constructed crushed stone pathway for easier entry to the park. Along the hillside, erosion control mulch was placed around the plantings, connecting them to a brown mulch pathway leading to the peninsula. Since this park receives more traffic than any other in the town of Belgrade, it was important to increase its usability while at the same time reducing erosion and protecting its natural beauty.

Stuart Cole, 7 Lakes' Erosion Control Project Manager, and Pete Kallin, 7 Lakes Board Member, at Peninsula Park.


2024 YOUTH CONSERVATION CORPS PROJECT SITES
SMITHFIELD
North Pond
East Pond
ROME
McGrath Pond
OAKLAND
Great Pond
Salmon Lake
Long Pond
Messalonskee Lake
BELGRADE
N
0
2.5
5 mi
2024 YCC Project Site
7 Lakes Conserved Land

FALL 2024 WATER QUALITY REPORT BY LAND AND POND

NORTH POND

2,225 ACRES, MAXIMUM DEPTH OF 20 FEET.

Average water clarity in 2024 was 13.2 ft, which is similar to 2023 (12.2 ft). However, North Pond experienced a "severe algae bloom" (clarity less than 6.5 ft) for three weeks in July of this year with the lowest clarity measurement being 2.8 ft. By comparison, the poorest clarity in 2023 was 8.5 ft. This year's algae bloom was earlier in the summer but also shorter in duration than in previous bloom years (2018, 2020, 2022). We are currently working with the North Pond Association to raise funds for an alum treatment similar to the 2018 East Pond alum treatment. Phosphorus is an essential nutrient for the growth of algae; aluminum binds with phosphorus, making it unavailable for algae growth. The algae bloom was tested by our team at 7 Lakes for harmful toxins (microcystin and anatoxin-a) throughout the summer, and no toxins were detected. North Pond is currently listed as "Threatened" by Maine DEP.

GREAT POND

8,239 ACRES, MAXIMUM DEPTH OF 69 FEET.

Average water clarity in 2024 was 19.2 ft, which is similar to the 2023 average (18.5). This is still slightly below the previous decade's average (20.1 ft). The declining water quality over the last decade is likely due to increased runoff and erosion following extreme rainfall events, highlighting the need to make watershed improvements and minimize erosion. Great Pond is listed by the State as "Impaired" by Maine DEP due to declining water clarity.

LONG POND

2,714 ACRES, MAXIMUM DEPTH OF 106 FEET.

Average clarity this year was 19.2 and 19.0 ft for the upper and lower basins, respectively, which is 1.0 and 1.5 ft better than the 2023 averages. Similar to Great Pond, water clarity is lower than average over the past decade (20.0 and 21.1 ft), also likely due to increased runoff and erosion following extreme weather events. Long Pond was added to the list of "Impaired" lakes by the State in 2006 due to declining water clarity.

MESSALONSKEE LAKE

3,510 ACRES, MAXIMUM DEPTH OF 113 FEET.

Average water quality in 2024 was 16.8 ft, while the 2023 average was 14.7 feet. This year was in line with the previous decade average (17.0 ft). Messalonskee is also listed as "Threatened" by the State due to the decline in water clarity in previous years.

Each of the Belgrade Lakes has unique characteristics, resulting in different responses to varying weather conditions each year. These responses are reflected in each lake's overall water quality, which is measured by assessing water clarity, nutrients, the abundance of algae, and more. While 2023 saw record amounts of rainfall, 2024 also featured several large storms. As extreme weather events continue to increase in frequency, we can expect the risk of rainfall and erosion to increase as well. Each of the 7 lakes are listed as either "Threatened" or "Impaired" based on criteria from the State of Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP); "Impaired": a lake whose water no longer meets the state's water quality standards. "Threatened": a lake whose water quality is in danger of becoming "Impaired."

EAST POND

1,823 ACRES, MAXIMUM DEPTH OF 27 FEET.

Average water clarity in 2024 was 14.0 ft, which is 3.7 ft less clear than the 2023 average (17.7 ft). 2024 saw some of the lowest water clarity measurements since the alum treatment in 2018, while 2023 was one of the best years of clarity since the treatment. Year to year variations in weather and climate can have big impacts on the lake. 7 Lakes continues to intensively monitor the water quality on East Pond to understand how the alum treatment is faring. East Pond is listed as "Impaired" by Maine DEP.

MCGRATH POND

486 ACRES, MAXIMUM DEPTH OF 27 FEET.

Average water clarity in 2024 was 21.3 ft, and 2.0 ft better than in 2023 (19.3 ft). We are often asked why McGrath stays clear when Salmon has algal blooms, even though they are connected. This is mainly due to their individual depths and temperature characteristics. McGrath Pond is also listed as "Threatened" by Maine DEP, because McGrath shares a watershed with Salmon.

SALMON LAKE

666 ACRES, MAXIMUM DEPTH OF 57 FEET.

Average water clarity this year was 19.2 ft which is 3.8 ft better than in 2023 (15.4 ft). Salmon Lake typically experiences a fall algae bloom but has not bloomed as of November 1, 2024. In 2023, Salmon Lake bloomed much earlier starting in mid-August which was likely influenced by the record amount of rainfall and subsequent erosion. No harmful toxins (microcystin, anatoxin-a) were detected in algae samples. Salmon Lake is listed as "Threatened" by Maine DEP.

*"Impaired": a lake whose water no longer meets the state's water quality standards.
**"Threatened": a lake whose water quality is in danger of becoming "Impaired."

ON THE WATER— DISCOVERING THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN LAKE AND LAND ON OUR FLOATING CLASSROOM

SALLY WHITTINGTON
7 Lakes Alliance Community Engagement Coordinator

Campers looking at live phytoplankton with 7 Lakes Alliance Lake Scientist Matt Farragher

7 Lakes Alliance was delighted to introduce a floating classroom to our programming this summer. This 22-foot pontoon boat is specially equipped with a microscope, water sampling kits, and binoculars that allowed us to host people of all ages for numerous educational outings. We are grateful for several donors whose generosity allowed 7 Lakes Alliance to launch this new educational program.

7 Lakes hosted several environmental programs that gave a front-row seat to important bird nesting habitats, valuable undeveloped shorelines, and real-life examples of how conserved land is protective of water quality. On one of these outings, our Land Director Noah Pollock highlighted the numerous properties conserved by 7 Lakes on Great Pond, and shared key insights into why those ecosystems are worth protecting. From the view of the boat, it is easy to see the effects of runoff rainwater that flows from the highlands to the lowlands, and into the lakes, demonstrating how crucial the land is for buffering our lakes from pollutants that can ultimately trigger algal blooms.

7 Lakes environmental programming for all ages, is designed to instill a deep appreciation for and a better understanding of nature—thus hopefully stewarding the next generation of conservationists. This summer, more than 160 youth from the greater community participated in programming on the boat with Lake Scientist Matt Farragher and Community Engagement Coordinator, Sally Whittington. Campers from both Belgrade Recreation's Camp Golden Pond and the Waterville Area Boys & Girls Club's Camp Tracy received hands-on experience measuring lake health, learning about different ecosystems within the watershed, and why it's important to take care of the lands and waters

One of the most rewarding parts of our educational programming is seeing the moment when participants recognize the harmful impacts shoreline erosion has on water quality, or the spark in a child's eye when they realize that the aquatic plants they are afraid to swim near are teeming with life and wonder. The education boat created some of the most memorable programs of the season and drove home the importance of fostering respect for nature in young and old alike. It is these impactful connections that inspire us to continue protecting our watershed for all.

A NEW UNIVERSALLY ACCESSIBLE TRAIL IN ROME

DAN WOUGHTER
7 Lakes Alliance Land Steward

This fall, 7 Lakes Alliance completed the construction of our newest trail on conserved land across from the Round Top Trailhead on Watson Pond Road in Rome. The new trail is 0.3 miles long and is designed to be wheelchair accessible. 7 Lakes is excited to add a new type of trail to the existing Round Top Trail system that will provide access to people with limited mobility for whom nearby trail options are limited. This trail is part of a larger project to establish an outdoor education center, which will include a large parking area, moldering privy, and a large pavilion. We will use this space as an outdoor classroom, and it will be a home for many of the events that 7 Lakes already hosts. The trail will be open year-round, but the parking area will be closed during the winter. After completion of the renovations, visitors will be able to explore the trail, enjoy the shade of the pavilion, or use the privy facility.

This is an ongoing project, and though the trail is completed, some parts of the project will not be finished until 2025. As such, access to the property may be limited in the coming months, as contractors use the access road to complete this project. We will host a grand opening of the property in the summer of 2025 when the trail, access road, parking lot, and pavilion will be ready for visitors! We would also like to thank Maine's Recreational Trails Program for helping to fund this project.

Thank you to Maine's Recreational Trails Program for helping to fund this project.

7 LAKES ALLIANCE ACCREDITATION RENEWAL NOTICE

Stakeholder Notification/Public Notice

The land trust accreditation program recognizes land conservation organizations that meet national quality standards for protecting important natural places and working lands forever. 7 Lakes Alliance is pleased to announce it is applying for renewal of accreditation. A public comment period is now open.

The Land Trust Accreditation Commission, an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance, conducts an extensive review of each applicant's policies and programs.

The Commission invites public input and accepts signed, written comments on pending applications. Comments must relate to how 7 Lakes Alliance complies with national quality standards. These standards address the ethical and technical operation of a land trust. For the full list of standards see **landtrustaccreditation.org/help-and-resources/indicator-practices**.

To learn more about the accreditation program and to submit a comment, visit **landtrustaccreditation.org**, or email your comment to **info@landtrustaccreditation.org**. Comments may also be mailed to the **Land Trust Accreditation Commission, Attn: Public Comments, 36 Phila Street, Suite 2, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866**.

Comments on 7 Lakes Alliance's application will be most useful by December 20, 2024.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: LIVING LIGHTLY ON THE LAND

7 Lakes Alliance is committed to conserving land and protecting natural resources, but we recognize that not all development is bad. Development can be done sustainably and in harmony with the environment and our lakes, but as with most things in life, to do it right takes effort. You need to do some research before grabbing a shovel and digging a foundation. Even if you have already built your dream home, there is always room for improvement.

Wildflower meadows are a great way to decrease your environmental footprint. This meadow was created by Katie Meikle, the president of the North Pond Association, to make her home more LakeSmart.

Step 1: Location, Location, Location!

Whoever came up with that slogan was right. When it comes to sustainability, picking a suitable site is an important first step. Avoid building near sensitive ecosystems or critical habitats. For example, wetlands are muddy and damp. Not only are there laws against building on them, but it's a bad idea unless you like mosquitoes, mold, and throwing money away leveling your camp when it starts sinking.

When designing a construction project in close proximity to the lake, consider designs that minimize the amount of runoff into the lake. This would include minimizing construction on steep slopes, adding vegetative buffers or terracing to slow down runoff. If you are already on a steep slope, consider contacting our erosion control team or looking into the LakeSmart program to reduce runoff into the lake from your property.

If you are planning on installing solar panels, make sure your roof will slope to the south and check that south is not uphill (or you will be running the generator come winter when the sun peaks at 20º above the horizon).

Step 2: Minimize Your Impact

Construction vehicles are heavy and will compact the ground they drive on. Once it's been compacted, soil loses some of its ability to absorb water. In fact, compaction from construction equipment can cause soil to permanently change its hydraulic group and kill mature trees by damaging their root system. It also becomes harder to revegetate compacted soils. Before construction begins, have an erosion control plan: mark the boundary of the construction site to limit the impacted area, install a construction entrance that will reduce soil compaction as well as the amount of dirt leaving the job site on truck tires, place hay bales or silt fences downhill of areas with bare dirt or erosion, and keep a natural buffer around the lot to catch runoff.

If you are trying to improve your property, think critically about how much lawn you truly need. Turf grass grows very shallow roots and does little to stop erosion and absorb excess nutrients, especially when compared to native plants. Reverting unused sections of your yard to a wildflower garden will not only benefit pollinators, but it will also cut down your time spent mowing.

Step 3: Get it in the Ground!

The main tenant of Low Impact Development (LID) is to treat runoff at the source. The longer rainwater flows as surface water, the more pollutants it will pick up. As the water consolidates, it picks up momentum and starts eroding. The goal is to get rainwater into the ground (or storage) as quickly as possible. An infiltration trench along a roof dripline, or a dry well at a gutter downspout, is an easy retrofit for existing structures. Rain gardens or other types of detention cells allow rainwater to pool up and give the water a chance to infiltrate into the ground.

TO THOSE OF YOU WHO LIVE ON A ROAD, OR HAVE A DRIVEWAY, REMEMBER:

DIRTY DITCHES GET STITCHES

If you don't keep drainage pathways clear; they don't drain. PLEASE Remove leaves and sticks from your ditches and culverts before you close up camp for the winter. Most road and driveway washouts are caused by blockages or limited capacity.

Step 4: Watch and See

There are mathematical equations for how big to make your stormwater treatment project based on how much impervious surface you are treating, what type of soil you have, which pollutants you are planning on removing, and so on. Theory is great, but always keep an eye on what you have installed. If roof runoff is flowing out the end of the infiltration trench, your soil may have more clay than expected and you might have to install a dry well to catch the overflow. Or it could be clogged and need maintenance.

LID focuses on mimicking the natural hydrodynamics of the environment. An undeveloped lot will only have about 5-10% of rainfall end up as runoff, the rest of the rain will be taken up by vegetation or infiltrate into the ground. For a developed lot, that number can jump to 50-60%.

Bonus Step: Retrofitting and Improvements

A lot of sustainability tips can be applied to existing development. For example, last fall the folks at Laposa Estates in Mount Vernon worked with 7 Lakes to upgrade their road and solve some major erosion and drainage issues. This project was part of the Long Pond 319 grant and will keep an estimated 19.3 tons of sediment out of the lake per year. That's roughly 10 pounds of phosphorus!

If your road is experiencing erosion control problems, or would like help reducing the impact of your property, contact our Erosion Control Team:

LYNN GEIGER
7 Lakes Alliance
Erosion Control Policy Manager
lynn.geiger@7lakesalliance.org

STUART COLE
7 Lakes Alliance
Erosion Control Project Coordinator
stuart.cole@7lakesalliance.org

Funding for this project, in part, was provided by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency under Section 319 of the Clean Water Act. The funding is administered by the Maine Department of Environmental Protection in partnership with EPA.

7 LAKES ALLIANCE SCIENCE TEAM PREPARES FOR NORTH POND ALUM TREATMENT

The science team at 7 Lakes Alliance, led by Lake Science Director, Dr. Danielle Wain, in partnership with Dr. Whitney King at Colby, the North Pond Association, the Maine DEP, and others have begun the strategic planning phase to remediate algal blooms on North Pond that have plagued the lake for several years.

According to CEO, Dr. Chris Monz, 7 Lakes Alliance is actively engaged in a preliminary strategic planning process, which includes filing the necessary permits with the Maine DEP in hopes of overseeing an alum treatment. Funding for this costly project will come from multiple sources that will likely include a Federal grant with the support of Senator Susan Collins for over $2M and a 20% matching component which is being raised with the leadership of the North Pond Association with the support of shorefront property owners who have been urged to contribute 2% of their assessed property value.

Dr. Monz says, "7 Lakes is uniquely positioned to direct this treatment to address ongoing algal blooms with a top-notch lake science team of experts and significant partners, including Colby and the Maine DEP." Moreover, he noted, "We have in-depth water quality data going back decades that gives us a leg up on the scientific analysis needed to plan an effective and hopefully long-lasting alum treatment." He continued, "We were all saddened and distressed by the ongoing algal blooms this summer that impacted so many residents who were unable to enjoy the lake – especially during the extended heat wave period." He noted that Pine Tree Camp reported that their campers were unable to go in the water for 30 days this summer – a significant number of their summer programming days for children and adults with physical and developmental disabilities.

> **"7 Lakes is uniquely positioned to direct this treatment to address ongoing algal blooms with a top-notch lake science team of experts and significant partners, including Colby and the Maine DEP."**
>
> *—Chris Monz*

7 Lakes directed an alum treatment in 2018 in partnership with the East Pond Association, Colby College, and the Maine DEP that has resulted in a clear lake for nearly 7 years. East Pond was the largest alum treatment ever done in New England, and North Pond is an even larger lake. Alum treatments are very expensive and therefore the very last option behind erosion control work and land conservation. Alum treatments need to be done concurrently with these other efforts to extend the longevity of the alum treatment, by reducing phosphorus loading that triggers algal blooms. This begins with individual homeowners taking the steps to ensure that their properties are as lake-friendly as possible. Collectively, properties that are contributing to the erosion problem have a meaningful impact on the amount of runoff that goes into our lakes. To learn about how you can help make your property more lake-friendly, please refer to7lakesalliance.org or call 7 Lakes at 207-495-6039. To learn more about the North Pond alum treatment, or to make a donation, refer to the North Pond Association website northpondmaine.org.

7 Lakes' Dr. Danielle Wain, CEO Chris Monz and North Pond Association President Katie Meikle observing an early algal bloom at Pine Tree Camp in July

WHY WE GIVE

Carol, Russ and Emily Sabia: A Family Making a Difference in the Belgrade Lakes Watershed.

7 Lakes Alliance has conserved 82 acres near Long Pond thanks to the generosity and vision of the Sabia Family - Belgrade summer residents. The land parcel is part of a 479-acre undeveloped habitat block with an intact upland forest, rolling hills, and a large cedar stand with 15 acres of wetlands.

Russ, Carol, and daughter Emily Sabia are steadfast and generous supporters of 7 Lakes. Russ also volunteers as a LakeSmart evaluator. Carol's parents, Frank and Loretta Rosa, bought this special land in the 1970s. Carol and Russ in turn, bought the land from her siblings in 2018 in order to ensure that the land would be protected from development. The land borders the road to their cottage and they love driving the first mile on a dirt road seeing only woodlands and forest along the way. They also enjoy seeing turtles perched on rocks along with deer, hawks, bobcats, and other wildlife that are protected by this large untouched parcel.

Russ and Carol began talking to 7 Lakes in 2021 about the possibility of donating the land to protect it in perpetuity. They noted that Laura Rose Day, 7 Lakes Chief Conservation and Special Initiative Officer was very helpful in carefully walking them through their land conservation options and assuring them that their wishes would be honored. Carol shared that they want to help 7 Lakes reach the goal of protecting 30% of the watershed, recognizing that upstream woodlands and wetlands are critical in safeguarding water quality. They emphasized that they want to do their part to protect the beauty and integrity of the lands and lakes they care about so deeply. They also noted that while the tax advantages were appealing, the real joy was in leaving a legacy that honors both the Rosa and Sabia families that will be forever known as the RoSabia Preserve. Carol says: "We hope this donation might inspire others to donate land or a conservation easement and encourage anyone to contact 7 Lakes to learn about the many options and benefits for conserving your land."

Laura Rose Day and Land Conservation Director, Noah Pollock have greatly enjoyed partnering with the Sabias who they point out are "some of the nicest conservation-minded people that you will ever want to meet." Laura noted that "Carol introduced us to these special woods as if they were an old family friend – with beautiful old cedar stands, wetlands and dense groundcover with some rare plants. This diverse place will help us protect our waters and harbor wildlife and we are honored to safeguard it forever."

7 Lakes will be working with the Sabias to develop a forest management plan, including the possibility of light recreational use.

For information about donating land or a conservation easement, please contact Noah Pollock at noah.pollock@7lakesalliance.org.

BECOME A MEMBER!

7 Lakes Alliance Leadership Circle members provide critical annual support for all of 7 Lakes' programs to safeguard and restore the waters and lands of the Belgrade Lakes watershed.

WATERSHED CONSERVATOR
$50,000 and up

WATERSHED PROTECTOR
$25,000–$49,999

WATERSHED DEFENDER
$10,000–$24,999

WATERSHED CHAMPION
$5,000–$9,999

WATERSHED GUARDIAN
$1,000–$4,999

WATERSHED STEWARD
$50–$999

READY TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Contact Laurie Raleigh at **lhraleigh@7lakesalliance.org** / **(207) 931-8806**

Scan the QR code, or go to: **7LAKESALLIANCE.ORG**

YOUR DONATIONS FUND CONSERVATION WORK IN:

- **WATER QUALITY**
- **INVASIVE AQUATICS**
- **LAND CONSERVATION & STEWARDSHIP**
- **EROSION CONTROL**
- **EDUCATION & OUTREACH**

Annual unrestricted contributions from Leadership Circle members make our mission to conserve the lakes and lands of the Belgrade Lakes watershed possible. All members who make a yearly gift will be recognized in our annual report. Members who give $1,000 or more will be invited to an annual event. Please join today and make a difference in the place you love!

7 LAKES ALLIANCE
P.O. Box 250, 137 Main Street, Belgrade, ME 04918 | (207) 495-6039

WAYS TO GIVE

There are many ways you can make an impact to save the lakes and lands of the Belgrade Lakes watershed. In addition to making an online donation or sending a check, here are some other ways to support 7 Lakes Alliance.

Gifts of Stock

Donating appreciated stock is an easy and effective way to reduce your income tax exposure while supporting 7 Lakes. If a gift of securities is something that you would like to discuss, please call Laurie Raleigh or (207) 931-8806. For more information, refer to the Donate page of our website. (See below).

Gifts from a Donor-Advised Fund (DAF)

Manage your charitable giving through this convenient type of giving program with favorable tax benefits. A DAF is a charitable gift account established by the donor at a sponsoring institution such as Fidelity, Schwab or BNY Mellon. The sponsor handles all record-keeping, disbursements and tax receipts. Since a DAF is a registered charity, it offers the same tax advantages of making direct contributions to a charity with added flexibility and convenience of the timing of disbursements to your favorite charities left to your discretion. Your financial/tax advisor can help you learn how to set up a donor-advised fund.

Gifts From Retirement Assets

If you are 70 ½ or older, you may designate up to $100,000 per year to a charity of your choice while meeting your required minimum distribution requirement. This form of gifting is referred to as a Qualified Charitable Distribution, or QCD. A gift directly from an IRA does not qualify for a charitable deduction; however, the required distribution from your account is not included in your taxable income – a benefit regardless of whether you itemize or use the standard deduction. Consult your accountant or tax attorney to see if a QCD might be a tax-effective way to support 7 Lakes.

Legacy Gifts in Your Will

With a planned gift to 7 Lakes Alliance, you will make a significant and lasting impact for generations to come. A bequest, a gift through your will or revocable trust, is one of the most meaningful ways to invest in the future of the Belgrade Lakes watershed with 7 Lakes Alliance. You can donate a specific amount, a percentage of your estate or a residual bequest. Almost any type of asset may be bequeathed, including securities, a portion or remainder of an IRA, qualified pension, cash or real estate. A charitable bequest can reduce the value of an estate and possibly reduce both state and federal estate taxes. An attorney can best advise you on the benefits of a bequest to 7 Lakes. If you plan to leave a legacy gift to 7 Lakes or would like to discuss this, please contact Laurie Raleigh (207-931-8806) so we may include you in our Legacy Circle.

In Memory of / In Honor of

Honor the memory of someone special or recognize a milestone event for a family member or friend with a gift that helps protect our lakes and lands forever.

7 Lakes Alliance
Tax ID number is
04-3047156

7lakesalliance.org/donate

Scan To Donate

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