

A LITTLE NEWS FROM OUR LITTLE LAKE SUNAPEE



Peter Bloch, EarthAerial Productions

Letter From The President

On Becoming a Lake Steward by Deborah Hoover

I have always loved being near water. Swimming, kayaking, exploring, observing, and simply listening to water are the ways I most naturally unwind. This connection began in childhood, when I spent countless hours playing in streams and discovering the creatures that lived among the rocks and plants. My children inherited this same curiosity and have become devoted water lovers themselves—especially when it comes to the magic of Little Lake Sunapee. They, in turn, are now exploring the lake with their own children.

Lakes and other bodies of water are complex ecosystems, and there is always more to learn about how to care for them. While we often think of lakes as permanent fixtures of the landscape, they are actually dynamic systems that slowly evolve, eventually transitioning from open water to boggy habitats such as Philbrick-Cricenti Bog. Human activity can unfortunately accelerate this natural process. That reality makes it especially important for those of us who treasure the lake to reduce the impact of our actions in and around it. Even with my long-standing interest in lake health and ecology, I quickly realized there was much more for me to learn in order to serve effectively as LLSA President. I began reading widely—books on lake chemistry, the Great Lakes, invasive species, land conservation, and shoreline planting. Each has deepened my understanding of what it truly means to be an informed and active lake steward. I continue to enjoy our lake with reverence and wonder, now paired with a stronger sense of responsibility to protect a precious resource that belongs to us ALL.

To encourage others to embark on their own learning journeys, LLSA has purchased a collection of books on lake stewardship for Tracy Memorial Library, with titles for both adults and children. We hope the quieter winter months will provide time for reflection and learning, helping us grow together as knowledgeable and committed stewards of Little Lake Sunapee. This special collection is donated in fond memory of Patricia Sheehan (1936–2025), an unwavering lake steward and distinguished President of LLSA from 2014 to 2016.

Remembering Pat Sheehan

Patricia Sheehan served as a role model for all who sought to deepen their lake stewardship skills. Before becoming LLSPA President, she served as Treasurer, drawing on her professional education and experience as a tax accountant. Her selfless dedication of time and talent strengthened LLSPA's capacity in countless ways, enhancing its ability to serve the community and inspire others to become informed lake advocates. Pat's generosity of spirit will be long remembered and deeply missed. The Sheehan family's devotion to the health of New Hampshire's lakes continues to have a lasting impact. Jack Sheehan, Pat's husband of 66 years, is a widely recognized lake steward and a steadfast protector of loons on our lake. Their son, Duffy Sheehan, serves as Treasurer and board member of NH LAKES. We are deeply grateful to Pat and the entire Sheehan family for sharing their vision, leadership, and enduring commitment to the protection of our Little Lake alongside all of New Hampshire's precious lakes.



New Septic Health Regulation Takes Effect January 1

Beginning January 1, 2026, all developed properties in New London with individual septic systems must have their septic tank pumped and visually inspected at least once every three years. Property owners must submit a copy of the pumping receipt with any visual inspection notes to the Town as proof of compliance.

How to Submit Your Septic Pumping Receipt:

After your system is pumped and inspected, please have your contractor provide a receipt that includes the date, approximate gallons pumped, and any system deficiencies.

Receipts may be submitted in any of the following ways:

By Email

Septic@NewLondon.NH.gov

By Mail or In-Person

Town of New London

375 Main Street

New London, NH 03257



A selection of the books LLSPA purchased for Tracy Memorial Library about lake stewardship! Check them out!

Staying Safe While Using Less Salt

by Cynthia Kelsey

Winter safety matters but so does protecting our lakes and our drinking water. While salt products do help reduce slipping and falling, much of it washes into the lake and groundwater, where it harms water quality and aquatic life. The good news is that safety does NOT require heavy salting! Here are some guidelines that will still keep one safe, while also protecting our lakes and drinking water:

- Use less salt! ONE coffee mug of salt is often enough for an entire driveway or walkway. More salt does NOT melt ice faster—it just ends up in our lakes.
- Use the right tool for the temperature. Salt works best above 15°F. When it's colder, switch to sand or traction grit for grip without adding chlorides to the environment. Please consider salt alternatives such as calcium magnesium acetate (CMA) or blended products that use significantly less salt. Ask local stores to please stock good alternatives.
- Shovel early and aim carefully. Prompt shoveling prevents ice buildup and reduces the need for salt. Keep salt and alternatives on paved surfaces only—never on lawns, soil, or near shorelines where runoff flows directly to our lakes. If there is excess product, sweep it up. Keep a bucket near by and keep it for your next storm!
- Salt accumulates in lakes over time. Small changes by New London and Springfield residents add up. By shoveling early, using alternatives, and applying salt sparingly, we can stay safe while protecting the lakes that define our community.

An Ecologic Approach to Lakefront Gardening

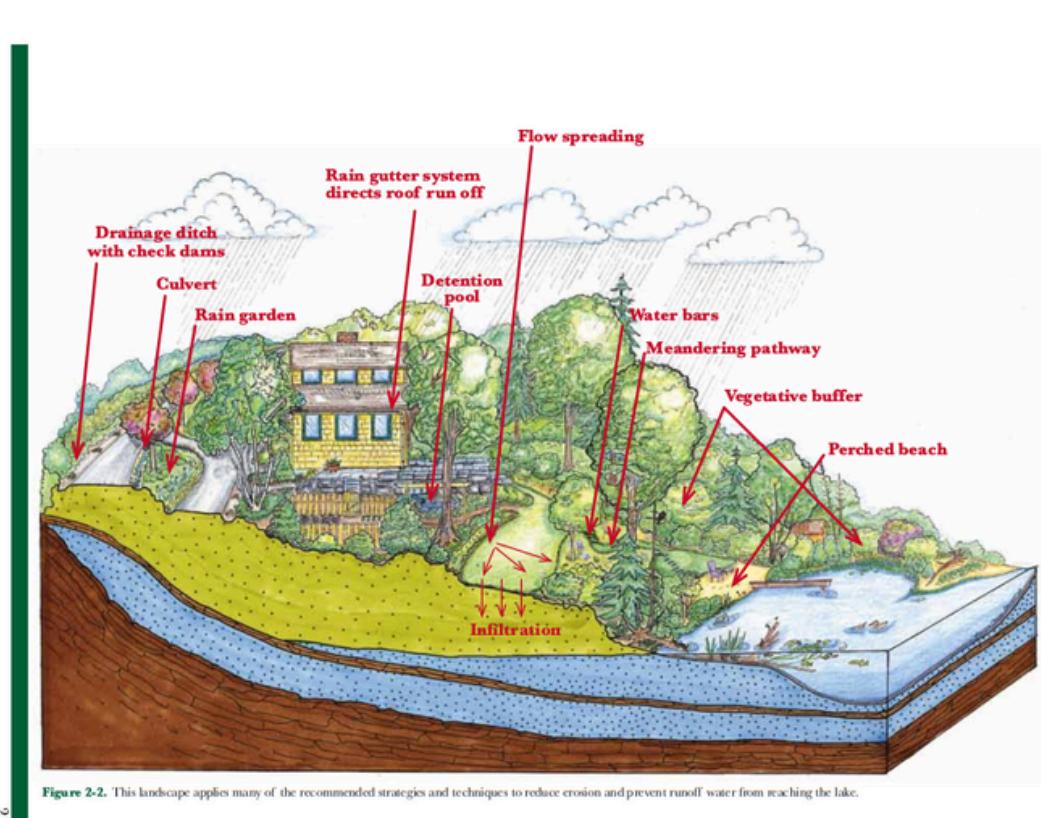


Image from: University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension. Landscaping at the Water's Edge: An Ecological Approach. Durham, NH: University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension, 2007. PDF file. If you are interested in learning more, check the full article out here: https://extension.unh.edu/sites/default/files/migrated_unmanaged_files/resource004159_rep5940.pdf.

Looks Can Be Deceiving: Maintaining the Water Quality of Little Lake Sunapee

By: Kathy Thomas, MS Environmental Sciences and Mike Thomas P.E.

As we look at the lake that we love, it appears to be as peaceful and clean as ever. In fact, the water clarity was noticeably better this past summer, due primarily to the drought and the lack of stormwater runoff into the lake. But lakes and rivers are complex systems where natural changes happen subtly over centuries. When we look at the chemistry and biology of Little Lake Sunapee, there are disturbing changes taking place.

The levels of salinity and phosphorous are rising and the amount of dissolved oxygen at depth in the East Basin drops to near zero in late summer and fall. And as we are all aware, several small cyanobacteria blooms have prompted warnings being posted at Bucklin Beach to swim at your own risk. All of these issues suggest that Little Lake Sunapee is aging more quickly than in the past. Like people, all lakes naturally age. As the quantity of nutrients increases, lakes become weedier, the lake bottom develops a noticeable layer of muck, and the water becomes less clear. This natural process, called eutrophication, usually happens slowly over the course of centuries.

But human activity in Little Lake Sunapee's watershed has sped up this process and the lake is showing signs of accelerated aging. Because much of this area of NH was deforested and used for sheep grazing in the 1800s (a period known as the "Great Sheep Boom"), soils in the Little Lake Sunapee watershed now have high levels of nutrients. Soil that was eroded during that time, and since, has carried large quantities of nutrients, phosphorus in particular, into the lake. (Phosphorus is considered by the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services to be the primary "limiting nutrient" in New Hampshire lakes. So even small increases in phosphorus can trigger cyanobacteria blooms that harm aquatic life and human health.). Many of these nutrients are locked in the sediments in the bottom of the lake (more about that later).



"PINE POINT" IN LITTLE SUNAPEE, WITH NEW LONDON HILL AND KEARSARGE IN THE DISTANCE.

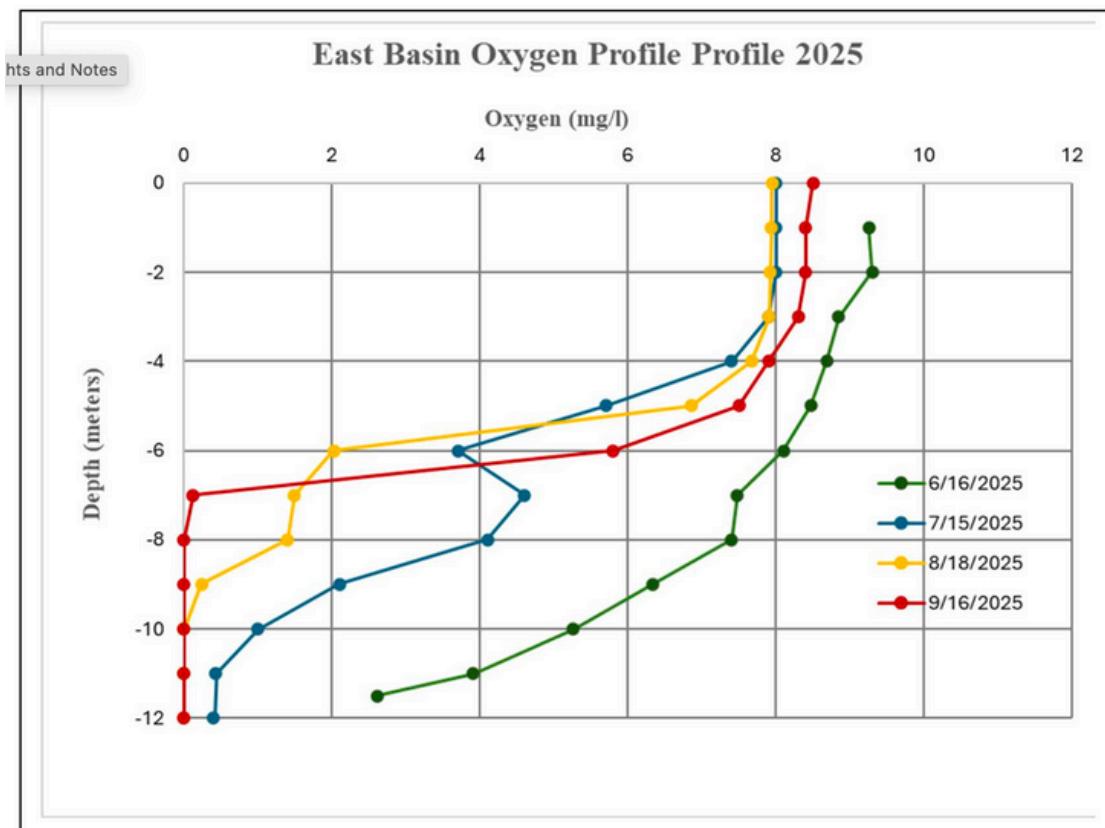
Looks Can Be Deceiving: Maintaining the Water Quality of Little Lake Sunapee continued

By: Kathy Thomas, MS Environmental Sciences and Mike Thomas P.E.

Today, thanks to stormwater runoff, nutrients are continuing to enter Little Lake Sunapee. One disturbing effect of increased nutrients (especially in the East Basin) is that there are extended periods of time when the concentration of oxygen in the water is at or very near zero from a depth of about 20 feet to the bottom of the lake (about 40 feet). This condition, called anoxia, has direct effects on the fish and animals at depth, but this change also causes nutrients that are locked in the sediments at the bottom of the lake to be released back into the water.

When nutrients, such as phosphorus, enter the lake, they promote algae growth. While algae do produce oxygen in the top layer of water, when the cells die and decompose on the bottom of the lake, the decomposition process consumes oxygen from an already oxygen-starved environment. This can lead to a troublesome cycle, because when oxygen levels become low at the bottom of the lake, the sediments naturally release bound up phosphorus, which leads to more algae/cyanobacteria growth and a perpetuation of the anoxia problem. The cyanobacteria blooms that we have been experiencing are directly related to the concentration of nutrients in the lake. When levels of phosphorus exceed an acceptable level for clear lakes (8 milligrams per liter), cyanobacteria are likely to bloom. In both 2024 and 2025, phosphorus measured levels in the East Basin increased as the summer progressed. By late summer the measured levels of phosphorus in the East Basin were 1.5 to 2.0 times greater than the acceptable level. The salinity of the lake is also rising due to the increased use of salt in the winter to control ice. Higher chloride concentrations in the water disturb the food web by reducing the number of zooplankton, tiny organisms that are the base of the lake food chain. If there are less zooplankton, phytoplankton (which zooplankton consume) including cyanobacteria are more likely to grow.

So what do we do?



Looks Can Be Deceiving: Maintaining the Water Quality of Little Lake Sunapee continued

By: Kathy Thomas, MS Environmental Sciences and Mike Thomas P.E.

The Little Lake Sunapee Protective Association is initiating a campaign to address the deteriorating water quality of the lake. We believe that if we take a community approach, together we can slow the process of eutrophication and delay the onset of a tipping point where our beloved lake becomes less desirable. A less desirable lake will have economic consequences, including lower property values and impacts on jobs and businesses that serve tourists and locals who come to the area for the joy of outdoor offerings.

The measures required to slow the process of lake eutrophication are not difficult or costly. But these steps will require the participation of ALL OF US, including those who live some distance from the lake. These measures will include reducing or eliminating fertilizers applied to lawns and gardens, getting septic systems inspected and pumped, controlling stormwater flows from roofs and driveways, and picking up after our pets.

New Hampshire is blessed with numerous pristine lakes and ponds. If we don't do enough to slow the process of aging, our lake will lose its clarity, become weedier, have larger and more frequent cyanobacterial blooms.

It will no longer be the lake we have grown to know and love.

Please be on the lookout for future communications where we will outline the steps that all of us—whether we live on the lake or not—can take to help keep our lake clean and beautiful. This issue is bigger than the Protective Association – we need to work together as a community to make meaningful changes in our behavior.



Image from Peter Bloch, EarthAerial Productions

"In the midst of winter, I finally learned that within me there lay an invincible summer." -Albert Camus

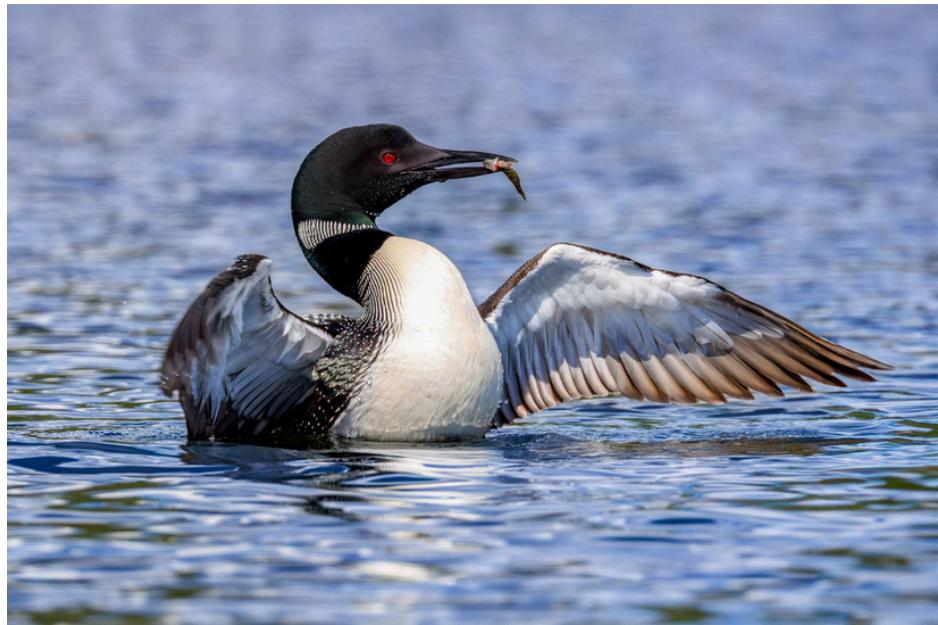
Save The Date!

Kindly save the date for our LLSPA Annual Meeting Saturday, July 11, 2026 4pm New London Historical Society.



But While it IS Still Winter.. Tips for Safe Uses of Dock de-icers!

- Use a correctly sized de-icer with a timer and thermostat to keep the open-water area small.
- Run it only when air temps drop below 32°F — 2-4 hours/day is usually enough.
- Check the unit regularly and tweak settings as needed.
- Aim for a narrow open-water ring around the dock (bubbler are best).
- Point circulators straight down, not out toward the lake; use a proper bracket for easy adjustment.
- Post "Danger Thin Ice" signs — required by law.



Photograph by Peter Jacoby

Though we are currently blanketed by several feet of snow, summer preparations (particularly for our loons!) have been quietly underway. Our resident Little Lake loon expert and volunteer, Jack Sheehan, has been researching a proper replacement for the camo cover for the artificial loon nest that resides on our lake. Also, John Wilson from Pleasant Lake has generously offered to build a new platform for that nest. John built our current platform and many others for various NH lakes. John has volunteered to donate time and materials for this project. In addition, the LLSPA has been in touch with the Loon Preservation Committee, to discuss the possibility of a second artificial nest where this past summer's loonlets hatched. Thank you, John and Jack for your time, treasure and expertise!



Image from Peter Bloch, EarthAerial Productions

Thank you to Old Hampshire Designs and Blue Loon Bakery for Sponsoring The Point!



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If your business would like to sponsor the Little Lake Sunapee Protective Association, please email contact@littlesunapee.org

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