

Seymour Lake Association

Annual Meeting Minutes, July 25, 2020 – by Zoom 9:00 A.M.

Chuck Nichols, president; Rhonda Shippee, vice president; Jean McKenny, treasurer; Linda Buzzell, secretary

***Requires a vote

1. Call to Order & President's Remarks – Chuck Nichols

Chuck welcomed everyone to our first Zoom annual meeting and explained our decision because of issues of large gatherings due to COVID-19. He thanked board members for their continued service and indicated that SLA is in good financial shape if we have future problems.

2. Secretary's Report – Linda Buzzell - *Bruce Barter moved that the Secretary's report from last year's annual meeting be accepted; Woody Woods seconded, approved.*

Green Mountain Conservation Camp

The SLA Board again voted to sponsor two local kids for the 2020 Green Mountain Conservation Camps. Despite posting it in the newsletter and an email blast, we did not have any applicants this year. Then in March as COVID-19 raised its ugly head, the State cancelled the camp for this summer. The State hopes to open them again in 2021. SLA will be taking applications from boys or girls who will be 12 next summer. We will send out another notice in the fall.

3. Treasurer's Report – Jean McKenny

For the calendar year 2019, total income was \$25,056.59. Large numbers included in income were memberships \$9,330 and donations \$14,153.50. The total expenses were \$14,393.27. The majority of the expenses involve the greeter program at the boat access and, to a lesser extent, the newsletters. The difference of income over expenses of \$10,663.32 was placed in the SLA reserve fund. This fund was started several years ago so that, if the lake became infested with invasive species, SLA would not have to wait for money from the State and could act immediately to mitigate any infestation. The calendar year 2020 is off to a good start with membership receipts of \$8,050 and donations of \$12,423 as of this July 17th. The SLA membership continues to be very generous in investing to keep our wonderful lake in pristine condition. If anyone desires more specific information about SLA finances just contact me via e-mail at jmckenny@together.net.

Bruce Barter moved to accept the treasurer's report, Candy Moot seconded, approved.

4. Elections – Tim Buzzell

· **Nominating Committee** – Tim Buzzell, , Bonnie McWain, Sean Selby

· **Election of Board Members**

Terms expiring are Bruce Barter, Bonnie McWain, & Charles "Woody" Woods

The above three are put forward for re-election - Bruce Barter moved to accept the three members for re-election; Andy barter seconded, approved.

- **Election of Officers**

Chuck Nichols, president; Rhonda Shippee, vice president; Jean McKenny, treasurer; Linda Buzzell, secretary are put forward for re-election - Jim McWain moved to accept the officers for re-election, Andy barter seconded, approved.

- **5. Committee Reports**

- **Activities** - Frank Antonelli – Unfortunately, due to the pandemic the SLA Summer Social has been canceled – see you all next year.
- **Boating** – Tim Buzzell – email blast regarding appropriate boating behavior

- **Boat Launch Area – Tim Buzzell**

The area in front of the boat launch ramp continues to be problematic. Numerous boats have had difficulty getting away without grounding or hitting bottom with their props. The problem is caused by siltation from material that has eroded from the banks upstream of Sucker Brook. A proposal is in the works to address the erosion issue by planting trees in the eroded areas through the Orleans County Conservation District's Trees for Streams program. There is also some discussion about the possibility of channeling Sucker Brook in such a manner that silt no longer deposits directly in front of the boat ramp. Finally, SLA continues to apply pressure on the State of Vermont to dredge material from the built up area, and plans are to intensify this effort going forward.

- **Seymour Lake Boat Parade 2020 – Bonnie McWain**

What a glorious July 4th on Seymour Lake – a perfect weather day for a boat parade! Our annual event was advertised as being the only parade in the NEK that you could participate in or watch this year and the turnout was outstanding. There were over 40 decorated boats and water craft in the parade (we think that was a record!) from vintage antiques to brand new vessels. And the number of lakeside viewers far exceeded that number – cheering us on with enthusiasm equal to that of the boaters passing by. We tried to strike a balance between getting close enough so people on the shore could see the boats, and staying far enough away to minimize the waves to protect the shoreline (although it would seem that the impact of one trip around the lake is minimal compared to a single typical storm event!). Hope you all enjoyed what has become a tradition here at Seymour - same time, next year.....

- **Dam/Lake Level** – nothing to report
- **Fishing / Smelt** – Bill Bilowus reporting

Last Fall we formed a Smelt Committee for the SLA under the direction of President Chuck Nichols. The smelt in Lake Seymour have been on the decline since 2013. It definitely was affecting the size of the Lake Trout and Salmon in our lake and possibly loon reproduction. After researching the "best practices of smelt transferring", we connected with fishery biologists in the states of Maine and Vermont. We found it was better to transfer smelt eggs rather than smelt from donor streams to our receiver streams that enter Seymour Lake. Millions of eggs can be transferred on one large burlap bag. Working with biologist Pete Emerson of the Vermont Fish and Wildlife, and Matt Breten & Walt Driscoll of the Conservation Group, we put 10 burlaps from various Northeast Kingdom streams into four of our streams that empty into Seymour Lake. We monitored the eggs for 3 weeks until the eggs hatched and flowed happily into our

lake. We will continue this practice for the next two years. Hopefully, we will have smelt spawning in our streams in the Spring of the years to come and be able to sustain a healthy population of smelt in our beautiful Seymour Lake and improve fishing.

Our Seymour Lake Smelt Committee is composed of Tim Buzzell, Woody Woods Chuck Nichols, Shawn Austin, Matt Shippee, Bob Durgin, Denis Fortin, Trevor Barski, Shawn Selby, Justin Limogs, Dave Potter, Al Wooley, Jim McWain, and Ron Frascoia.

Bill met with the State on Friday and has set another meeting via Zoom September 17th.

• **Loons** - Dr. Charles Woods

The status of loons on Seymour Lake in 2020 continues to be both good and at the same time “concerning.” We have just completed the annual “loon count” survey of loon numbers and locations (Saturday July 18th). We counted 22 loons that morning between 6 and 10 AM. Fourteen (14) distributed around the lake in locations where loons congregate on a predictable basis, and a group of 8 that took off in the middle of the lake off Wolf Point and flew in a line close to the surface heading south (a grand sight). Last year we counted 7 resident loons and in 2018 we counted 11. So, the resident loon number on Seymour lake is stable or even growing. That is the good news.

The concerning situation is that our efforts to protect breeding loons on the floating nest platform is floundering in this once quiet cove. This year a pair of loons hung out near the beautiful nest platform created by Denis Fortin. It was, as usual, a near perfect nest situation.

But the pair was disturbed by other nearby loons and was slow to get on the nest. The female finally laid a pair of eggs late last week, and Nancy Bowen reports that this morning (July 19th) the loons are still on the nest, alternating between the two parents. This is a late nesting. The chicks should hatch about July 28th. We can be hopeful that all will go well and that the growing chicks can get off the lake before ice covers Seymour in December. There have not been any successful loon nestings in several years now, and the pattern of unsuccessful or compromised nestings continues. Why?

Some of the “problem” is explained because there are other loons on the lake and loons are notoriously intolerant of other loons. The presence of eagles on the lake could also disturb the loons as they seek the right conditions to nest. These are natural and biological explanations for the continued lack of a successful nesting. That is biology!

However, there is also a concerning situation with boat traffic. There have been many reported observations of people driving jet skis deep into the cove where the protected loon nest platform is located. And even reports of party boats cruising close to the loon nest in the evening. We can confirm that in the last few days we observed both occurring. A jet ski pulling a water skier zoomed deep into the cove along the edge of the nest site passing close to a nearby floating loon. The night of the loon count, a party boat pulled into the shore at the edge of the protected area at dusk. A loon was on the nest at the time and calling. It was very disruptive at a critical time.

What to do? The nesting situation for loons on Seymour Lake is complicated. Biology and natural history are complicated. But the situation with boats and people is not complicated. We need to enlarge the protected area around the nest site in the cove. The entire area of cove should be designated an environmentally protected zone closed to all boating during June and

July. Doing so would be inconvenient for a few people, but a major contribution to the loons that symbolize Seymour Lake and our efforts to pass this precious resource on to future generations of people and loons.

- **Maps** – Chuck Nichols – for sale at Morgan Store and Morgan town office and property lists on SLA website at <http://seymourlake.org/fun-maps/>

- **Membership Committee & Data** - Tom Adams and Bruce Barter

The membership committee is pleased to report that memberships are slightly ahead of last year at about this time. In this pandemic year, we are very pleased with these results. We hope those folks who have not yet joined are reminded by this message and send in their membership. Committee members have received their area reports and will be contacting folks who have not yet joined to encourage them to do so.

A summary of processed memberships we have received for 2020 through July 13th is below. As you can see, we're tracking very closely to last year at this point in the year. Some observations:

- the number of total memberships is very close to last year (317 vs. 314) even though this year's number is about two weeks earlier than last year's (July 13 vs. July 26)
- the number of donations is strong and well ahead of last year (209 vs. 197). This is consistent with the strong dollar numbers on the Treasurer's report
- the number of new memberships is stronger than last year (14 vs. 11) even though this year's number is about two weeks earlier than last year's
- the number of memberships not renewed is better than last year (60 vs. 71) even though this year's number is about two weeks earlier than last year's
- the percent of target properties with at least one membership is slightly lower than last year (61.9% vs. 63.0%), but acceptable since this year's number is about two weeks earlier than last year's

- **Milfoil Programs & Inspection** - Chuck Nichols / Beth Torpey

At the beginning of the season, we had some doubts as to whether the program would be allowed to run and what the level of funding would be, but we got off to a good start Memorial Day weekend. There are a handful of new greeters this year and we've already had several confirmed invasive species intercepts.

We're doing a targeted hot water decontamination on all watercraft coming from waterbodies that have animal invasive species, including Lakes Memphremagog, Champlain, Bomoseen, George, and lake to the west of VT.

While we received a decent amount of money this year (~\$16,000), considering the pandemic circumstances, future funding is at risk. We've been told to expect a 50% decrease in funding from Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation and that was before the pandemic. Future funding is a topic that should be addressed in the coming year.

Bruce Barter asked how many intercepts we had this year and Beth said 5.

Volunteer Invasive Patrollers (VIPs) – David Wieselmann

Our 2020 VIP program for Seymour Lake has been very different from previous years. Our Group training/refresher class was cancelled due to Covid. Instructional videos are being emailed to patrollers instead. A new volunteer has joined for a total of 13. And to date no invasive plants have been reported on the lake as the patrollers go around the lake in their kayaks surveying their areas.

• **Newsletter** - Erik Lessing

Your friendly newsletter committee consisting of Bruce Barter, Candy Moot and me, Erik want to update you on things concerning, naturally, the newsletter. The biggest news in case you didn't hear, is the rather lengthy delay in getting out the May issue. Normally this is put in bulk mail May 1st, but due to the Covid-19 problems, the SLA board decided to delay things to include more important news and hence the May 1st date turned into June 7th and then with the two to three week bulk mailing time frame, most recipients only got theirs from mid to late June.

We do hope you enjoyed the issue however and we did get many favorable comments from our readers. Special thanks to all the article authors. We were blessed with some interesting material this issue. Of course, what would you expect from and about Seymour Lake denizens like us.

If you have any interesting topics for subsequent issues, please let me know at Erik Lessing, eriklessing@comcast.net

• **Water Quality Programs** - Peggy Barter

Congratulations and thank you to all lake shore owners and those who own stream banks on the lake's tributaries who have done a little or a lot to help SLA significantly improve the lake's water quality by taking action to reduce phosphorus entering the lake! Seymour Lake is respected throughout the State for returning the lake's water to pristine levels, known by lake specialists as oligotrophic conditions. The water had been downgraded from about 2002 – 2015 to mesotrophic status because of the additional phosphorus. Lake Wise - the State program honoring properties for efforts improving their properties and the program that awarded Seymour Lake a "Gold" Lake Wise Award - offer some ideas about how we all can mow a little less, allow some shrubs to grow at the shore or plant a tree to replace some lawn. If you have earned a Lake Wise sign, please post it to help others see the many possibilities for maintaining a usable, attractive and protective lake shore. Less grass, which allows as much phosphorus runoff as pavement, is the goal. We also urge folks to be on the lookout for terrestrial invasive plants such as knotweed, phragmites and purple loosestrife. Vermont Invasives has a good web site for learning how to identify and remove these plants which threaten the fish population as well as wipe out the lake's terrestrial and aquatic wildlife. Thank you to those who are already doing their part to keep these plants from overtaking the shore.

• **Website / Facebook / Email blasts**

Efforts are being made to increase SLA's presence on Facebook, use Email blasts to get members information in a timely manner, and keeping the SLA website updated with pertinent information, pictures and other information to make SLA more vibrant and relevant for its members.

6. Closing - Chuck Nichols

SLA needs folks to help – join a committee

Woody Woods moved to adjourn at 9:40 a.m.; Rosemary Mills seconded, approved.