

SEYMOUR LAKE ASSOCIATION

Annual Meeting Minutes July 24, 2021 - Community Meeting House

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

1. Chuck Nichols - Call to order 9:09 a.m.

2. Old Business - N/A

3. Secretary's Report - correction to election of 9 board members, all extended one year due to COVID. Motion to accept Bruce Barter, seconded by Bob Steenrod, approved.

4. Treasurer's report

For the calendar year 2020, total income was \$24,846.45. Large numbers included in income were memberships \$8,900 and donations \$14,083. The total expenses were \$12,892.56. The majority of the expenses involve the greeter program at the boat access and, to a lesser extent, the newsletters and the smelt project. The difference of income over expenses of \$11,953.89 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 2021 is off to a good start with membership receipts of \$8,535 and donations of \$13,635 as of this July 21th. 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@earthlink.net.

Some discussion regarding the Reserve Funds and our leeway to use it. Motion to accept by Bob Steenrod, seconded by Bruce Barter, approved.

5. By Laws - Rhonda Shippee - Motion made to discuss by Sean Selby, seconded by Bob Steenrod, approved. Each existing and proposed Article was read. Motion to accept made by Bob Steenrod, seconded by Tom Adams, approved. The By Laws changes approved are attached separately to this report.

6. Elections - Nominating Committee - Tim Buzzell, Bonnie McWain, Sean Selby

Election of Board Members - Terms expiring are Bruce Barter, Bonnie McWain, & Charles "Woody" Woods. Bruce Barter, Woody Woods and Bruce Remick are put forward for election. Gil Wierschke called for closing the candidates. Motion passed to accept by Jim McWain, passed.

Election of Officers - Rhonda Shippee, president, Bonnie McWain, vice president, Jean McKenny, treasurer, Linda Buzzell, secretary. Motion made to accept by Bruce Barter, seconded by Bob Steenrod, approved.

Chuck mentioned the plaque given to honor Erik Lessing and others at the Annual Social for their work on the kayak lift for David Wieselmann, chair of the VIP program.

Rhonda takes over as president and gives Chuck a clock in recognition of his 7 years of service as president of SLA.

7. Committee Reports:

Activities - Frank Antonelli - the Annual Social was a huge success post-COVID. Thank you to Ron Kolar and his family for hosting the party at Camp Winape.

Boating - **Tim Buzzell** - in Bonnie McWain's absence, the boat parade was postponed to July 4th and was very successful this year, over 35 boats. The best part was all the people on their docks and beach cheering it on. The boat launch is still a problem but the new buoys marking the channel have been helpful.

Dam level - lake level has stayed stable.

Fishing/Smelt - **Bill Bilowus** - We are in our second year with the State on the smelt project. They laid 19 burlaps for spawning in several lakes and moved the eggs to several streams entering Seymour this spring. The hope is that the young smelt will return to spawn next spring. Project has one more year.

Loons - **Woody Woods** - The loon story is good. Bob Steenrod and I did a count last Saturday morning. Denis Fortin also counted. Denis counted 10 loons and a moose. Bob and I counted 18 loons (and 52 jet skis). The nesting pair which hang out near the loon platform did not nest, continuing the long absence of nesting loons. The last successful nesting was a single chick, which survived for a spell before being killed and eaten by an eagle. So, there are many loons on Seymour. And throughout Vermont loons are doing very well. It is a great conservation success story.

Why are loons not nesting on Seymour. It is a complicated situation. Loons are very territorial. The great success of the state-wide loon recovery program has created a situation where Seymour has an abundance of individual loons, which may reduce the chance of an individual pair nesting. And Seymour is a busy lake, with few coves and backwater areas where loons can find isolated places to nest.

But Echo and Norton had very successful nesting. And they don't have as much boat traffic and very few if any jet skis. They also have many fewer loons. Seymour is a beautiful lake. People love it. Loons love it. I don't know what we can do to make our breeding pair love it enough to begin sitting on the nest and produce chicks. But that is natural history. Should that happen, we would all be worrying about how to keep the eagles from killing the chicks. The eagle conservation program has also been a great success. We are watching natural history at work on Seymour, and it is very exciting.

Maps - **Chuck Nichols** - available at the Morgan Store for sale. The Town needs to approve the use of data by a new company to update the 2018 maps for next year.

Membership - **Tom Adams** - 65% of lakefront landowners are members and non-members will be solicited by the membership committee. Bruce Barter is our computer guru and he says we have 391 potential members, and 326 presently.

Milfoil/greeters - Beth Torpey - Another successful year, over 3,000 boats inspected last year. This year the numbers are down, maybe weather related. We need volunteers to be greeters after Labor Day when students and teachers return to school. Pressure wash is done for invasive animal species (i.e. zebra mussels); visual inspection for invasive plants is sufficient. Encourage renters to bring their boats to the access for inspection or contact Beth.

VIP - David Wieselmann - there is on line training available for volunteers. We have about 12 volunteers who patrol the lake looking for plant and animal invasive species. No significant changes. There is a need for more volunteers.

Newsletter - Erik Lessing, Bruce Barter, Candy Moot - The latest newsletter was about 6 weeks late because he wanted to include Candy's article and photos about the kayak lift for David Wieselmann.

Water Quality - Peggy Barter Water Quality Report

First our thanks to all of you who have attended meetings, read the newsletter and learned what changes you are willing to make to protect Seymour Lake's Water Quality.

I will address 5 topics today:

- EPA 2020 Environmental Merit Award to Seymour Lake Association and Its Community
- Lake Wise Update
- Land Based Invasive Plants Update
- Help Needed
- New state program to further protect lakes with high water quality (Lake Reclassification)

EPA 2020 Environmental Merit Award: Because the citizens of Morgan, Town leaders, Seymour Lake Association and even those who visit Seymour Lake have acted over the past 20 years to return the lake's water quality to nearly pristine condition, we were given this Award to recognize all the effort as well as the results. Seymour Lake **is the only high water quality lake in the EPA's Northeastern region to reverse a negative phosphorus trend.** Together we have reversed the trend by lowering and stabilizing the phosphorus level to return the lake to oligotrophic quality. Please stand up, give yourselves and our community a round of applause, and then thank the Town for the work it has done to support this effort. It took us all and we have not yet returned to the even lower phosphorus levels of the mid 1990's!

Lake Wise Update: Five items of good news regarding Lake Wise:

- As of June 1, we had more than 50 Lake Wise Awarded properties on Seymour Lake. Our Lake Wise participants this year have an opportunity to use a program at NWSC which has a grant to pay for labor to install lake friendly practices such as rain gardens, infiltration steps and water bars. The lake shore owner pays only for materials and plants. Labor is done by a trained NWSC Conservation Crew and planning is done to meet the lake shore owners' needs as well as Lake Wise objectives.
- Many more properties have earned Lake Wise Certificates which means those properties have in place many practices which protect water quality.

- So far this summer, nine property owners have had either a re-evaluation or an evaluation. Please contact me if you are interested in participating and please encourage your friends and neighbors on the lake to participate if only for the learning experience.
- We have a long way to equal Echo Lake, where nearly half of their properties have received the Lake Wise Award. At Seymour, with well over 300 lake shore properties we are below 20%. But, as important as having a high percentage of properties awarded Lake Wise signs is, even more important are the ever growing number of lake shore owners who are learning about how to maintain our lake's high water quality. During an evaluation, even if a property does not qualify for a sign, often the lake shore owner learns about something they are willing to do to help keep our water quality high.

Land Based Invasives Update: After many years of recommending hand control of knotweed and phragmites, we learned just this month that many environmental groups (including the Nature Conservancy) say that it is best to hire certified professional help for control both manual and suggest the use herbicidal treatment if needed. Northwoods Stewardship Center can be hired by lake shore owners for help with both manual and herbicidal control measures. They have staff fully licensed to do herbicidal applications. It has not been working well to try to control these plants with no herbicide use. The consequences of allowing these plants to flourish are too dire to continue as we have in the past. For more information please refer to your water quality resources handout. Among the volunteers working to control invasives during the past year are Carol & Dan Barry, Woody & Missy Woods, Rhonda Shippee, Kenni Friere, and Andy Barter. Kenni is keeping an eye out for Purple Loosestrife and removing it before it goes to seed.

Help Needed: More Lake Wise participants, persons to check rain gardens at Access to weed if weeds are present, and persons to organize an educational campaign about land based invasive species such as knotweed and phragmites, representatives from road groups to carry information to their members' meetings.

Access Best Management Practices Update: Many volunteers have contributed to the upkeep of the rain gardens, shrub zones and no mow zones at the F& W Access. Among the most active are Rhonda Shippee and Tom Adams who refresh the bark mulch and weed. Andy, Riley and Cooper Barter created and installed educational signs made from recycled materials and which identify the rain gardens and no mow zones.

Invitation From State to Reclassify Seymour Lake's Watershed as A(1):

- The State of VT has invited SLA to consider filing a petition to reclassify Seymour Lake and its watershed as A(1). They have also reached out to several other lakes in the state (including our neighbors Echo and Willoughby) which have high quality water, but increasing phosphorus. All lakes below 2,500 feet in Vermont are presently classified as B(2). Along with Seymour about 7 other lakes qualify for A(1) status. When a lake is identified as A(1) the entire watershed is considered, because actions in the entire watershed contribute to the health or pollution of a lake.
- Two Board members and I have been researching the process and its implication over many months. This is what we've learned and the Board has decided so far.
 - The reason the state is encouraging this is because they've learned that once a B(2) water body is declared impaired (like Champlain and Memphremagog), it is virtually impossible to reverse it. They have decided to take some proactive actions to preserve what high quality waters Vermont still has.

- Reclassification to A(1) would put Seymour into an elite water quality class that better reflects its actual condition. A(1) classification provides a mechanism for remedial action sooner than B(2) does should our water quality decline and that helps make state funds available for restoration work in a timely manner.
- A lake's classification covers not just the land bordering the lake but its entire watershed. For Seymour that is 13,226 acres.
- The state is in the beginning stages of developing processing of petitions for reclassification, thus we don't fully know what land use restrictions becoming A(1) might entail.
- Because much of the impact of an A(1) classification is beyond the lakeshore, we feel it is imperative that we have the support of the Morgan Selectboard before we consider filing a petition. We have had a preliminary discussion regarding the process with them.
- Fifteen percent (2,004 acres) of the watershed is located in the Town of Holland and we would need to reach out to them as well should we decide to file a petition.
- If we decide to recommend filing a petition for reclassification, we will hold a vote of SLA's membership and would not proceed without a positive vote of SLA members. Public information meetings would also be held to inform all property owners in the watershed and provide them an opportunity to comment.
- At this point, the Board has authorized the formation of an A(1) Investigation Committee which I will chair. We will continue to follow the state's progress in finalizing the restrictions for maintaining high water quality that apply to an A(1) watershed as this is critical to our decision to proceed or not. We will also have conversations with our water quality partners as well as neighboring lake associations along with their towns and follow the progress of any petitions filed by other lakes. We will keep SLA members informed as we learn more. We recognize that there are definitely significant advantages to becoming an A(1) lake, however, there is not enough information at this point to proceed with a petition and our Board is being cautious in its approach.
- I encourage any of you who seek more details on this issue to contact me. **We are dedicated to learning constantly as the program develops and are in no hurry to reach a decision before the program is finalized.**
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WATER QUALITY RESOURCES AND CONTACT INFORMATION

- **Contact Peggy Barter** sla.newsletter.wq@gmail.com
- with questions, offers to volunteer and suggestions.
- **Contacts at Northwoods Stewardship Center (NWSC)**

- Meghann Carter, Conservation Science Director - meghann@northwoodscenter.org
- Sam Perron, Forester and licensed herbicide applicator - sam@northwoodscenter.org

- **For additional copies** of an informative booklet for Lake Shore Owners “Sharing the Edge”

Visit: https://dec.vermont.gov/sites/dec/files/documents/lp_SharingTheEdge.pdf

- **Updated information** about control of PHRAGMITES and JAPANESE KNOTWEED !!!
- We learned last week that Lake Wise, The Nature Conservancy, VT Invasives and NWSC all now recommend lake shore owners and all landowners use a certified invasive control service to eradicate well established stands of both phragmites and knotweed, because the do-it-yourself methods we have been using in an effort to avoid herbicides is not working. Northwoods Stewardship Center will use both manual and herbicidal methods to remove those two invasive plants. Manual removal by the lake shore owner is still a good option to eliminate very small initial patches of these plants. Northwoods Stewardship Center (NWSC) is the closest licensed contractor for both manual and herbicidal treatment. For more information on invasive species and funding sources for control, visit www.vtinvasives.org.

- **Landscape Design for Healthy Lakes** – Access excellent guidance about native plants and professional landscape designs at SLA’s web site by visiting: <http://seymourlake.org/whats-new/>

- **Lake Shore Permitting:** Visit <https://dec.vermont.gov/watershed/lakes-ponds/permit/shoreland>

- **Potential Environmental Violations:**

To anonymously report a potential environmental violation, including possible violations of the Shoreland Protection law, visit: <http://dec.vermont.gov/enforcement/reporting> or call 802-828-1254. Information received from Vermont’s citizens is vital to efforts to protect Vermont’s environment. If you observe or have knowledge of any activity that may be in violation of Vermont’s environmental laws, we urge you to contact the Department of Environmental Conservation. The sooner a violation is reported, the greater our chances of limiting the threat to Seymour Lake’s water quality, wildlife and ultimately to human health

Website/Facebook/email blasts - looking at changing the website host this year. Doing email blasts for special messages and those at the meeting agreed they were very helpful.

Rhonda reiterated that we need more volunteers for all committees.

Motion to adjourn 11:20 a.m. passed