



# NEWICHAWANNOCK NEWS



*The iconic Bancroft barn, circa 1910, was a pleasure to behold in any season but was especially attractive in winter. Unfortunately it no longer stands. Photo courtesy of Chris Bancroft*

## Winters on Great East Lake

*By Bob Stearns*

Most of us envision swimming, fishing, boating and other such summer fun when we think of Great East, but winters on the lake are special too. In this edition we feature an assortment of historic winter photos, many of which were pulled from the Great East history book, *Newichawannock Reflections*. To learn more about winters on Great East, see pages 155-159 of the history book. It is available for purchase at the GELIA annual meeting, at local general stores and by contacting [booksales@greateastlake.org](mailto:booksales@greateastlake.org).

If you have old photos of Great East—summer or winter—that you'd like to contribute or if you have other historic material, stories or ideas that might be good for a future newsletter edition, please drop us a line at [newsletter@greateastlake.org](mailto:newsletter@greateastlake.org).



*Food and supplies for a winter's stay being pulled in on a sledge. At least one hearty family celebrated Christmas at the lake this way—10 years in a row! Photo courtesy of Helen Crawley*



*In the days before plows, horse-drawn rollers compressed the snow to help keep roads passable. Photo courtesy of Helen Crawley.*



*Good friends enjoying the quiet beauty of Great East Lake in winter, 1936.*





*The transportation from Burleyville (East Wakefield) train station to the lake doesn't look like it would be much fun in a blizzard. Photo courtesy of Mary (Chandler) Marple.*



*After two days of rain fell atop seven feet of accumulated winter snow in March 1969, camps everywhere on the lake suffered the consequences, including this one on Beechwood Park Road.*



*The Chandler family out on the ice in front of the Spoonery. They chopped holes in the ice for water and kept the Franklin stove ablaze for warmth. Photo courtesy of Mary (Chandler) Marple.*

## President's Column

*By Charles Crespi*  
President, GELIA

When Great East Lake was created after the last ice age, the glaciers left behind a cool climate, stratified lake, in a relatively small watershed (only about 5 times the area of the lake itself), surrounded by sandy, nutrient-poor soils which became covered by forest. Any lake scientist will tell you that this combination of attributes should result in a lake with very low phosphorus, high water clarity and extraordinary water quality.

As you know, GELIA's mission is to protect Great East Lake, primarily through education and outreach. By my count, this is my 15th "President's Column" for the GELIA newsletters. I have decided to make this one brief.

### Recap of 2024:

- GELIA has started the tributary sampling program. Twelve sampling sites have been established. Calibration of the flow gauges has been delayed due to the lack of heavy rains. We should be able to provide more information in the spring.
- The Lake Host courtesy boat inspection program was fully staffed for the Memorial Day to Labor Day season. The cost for this program has increased substantially. You will hear more about this in the spring membership letter.
- The lake was surveyed for invasive aquatic plants. No invasive plants were observed.
- The subdivision on Youngs Ridge Road was approved by the Acton Planning Board in November. The approved subdivision plan was consistent with the Settlement Agreement signed by GELIA and the developer. During the review process, several Planning Board members commented the robustness of the stormwater plan.
- Routine water quality sampling was conducted with the scientists from UNH. We will get the report in 2025.

While the retreat of glaciers created a pristine lake, it is the actions of property owners that sustain it.



## Wintertime on Great East Lake: Staying Safe, Protecting Nature

A message from the Acton Wakefield  
Watersheds Alliance (AWWA)

*Jon Balanoff*  
Executive Director, AWWA



As winter settles over Great East Lake, a wondrous transformation takes place. Beneath the icy surface, life continues to thrive, and this season plays a vital role in maintaining the health of our lakes. The colder months allow the water to turn over, replenishing it with fresh oxygen and nutrients while giving the ecosystem a reset for the coming year. Ice cover protects aquatic life by stabilizing the shoreline for hibernating frogs and turtles and reducing disturbances from wind and waves. It's a time for rest, renewal, and preparation for the coming spring.

Winter fun on the ice is part of what makes this season special. However, staying safe is essential. Always check ice thickness and conditions before venturing out. Ice three inches or less is too thin to safely support a person, so it's best to stay off entirely. Four inches of ice is suitable for ice fishing, walking, and skating. For snowmobiles and ATVs, five to seven inches of ice is recommended. Small cars require eight to twelve inches, while trucks need twelve inches or more of solid ice. Always check the quality and depth of ice, and exercise caution near areas of moving water, such as inlets and outlets, where ice may be thinner. Avoid using bubblers near the shoreline, as they make walking conditions unsafe and disturb hibernating species.

Keeping your camp rodent-free during winter is essential, but it's also important to do so in a way that protects our local wildlife and the lake's ecosystem. Most importantly, avoid using poisons. Rodenticides can inadvertently harm birds of prey and other animals. Snap traps are a safe alternative. You can also reduce the impact of pests by sealing entry

points and blocking any holes or gaps larger than a quarter inch. Proper food storage in airtight containers helps reduce attractants. Natural deterrents like peppermint oil and ultrasonic repellents offer a wildlife-friendly solution.

Even as the lake rests under its icy blanket, AWWA remains active year-round. Our Middle School Science Program engages students at the Paul and Acton Elementary Schools in learning about water quality through hands-on activities like well water testing, macroinvertebrate identification, and the "Trout in the Classroom" program. We are also hard at work planning new projects to reduce stormwater pollution and safeguard the pristine waters of Great East Lake and the watersheds of Acton and Wakefield.

There are many things you can do as a lakeside homeowner to keep the lake clean and healthy, no matter the time of year. AWWA is always a phone call away to discuss how you can make your camp lake-friendly and help us succeed. Together, we can ensure that Great East Lake remains a beautiful and thriving ecosystem for generations to come. Wishing you a safe and joyful winter season!

### Loons

*By Charles Crespi*

Well, the good news this year is that there were no mortalities among the eight territorial adult loons on Great East Lake. There was no evidence that the Second Basin pair or the Scribner River Pair nested. The Copp Brook pair nested, hatched a chick but the chick was killed within a week of hatching. The likely culprit was a non-territorial loon "visitor." Finally, the Loon Island pair nested but was scared off the nest by a nocturnal collision of a PWC with Loon Island (there was paint up on the rocks). The Loon Island pair did not successfully nest thereafter.

For those who may not be aware, PWC are legally operated between sunrise and sundown. This is why PWCs are not equipped with running lights. Operation of a PWC after sundown is dangerous, illegal and potentially harmful to wildlife, the PWC operator and other boaters on the lake. PWCs should be docked by sundown.





## Lake Host / Courtesy Boat Inspection Program

*By Jodi Carlberg and Charles Crespi*

2024 was an excellent year for the Lake Host / Courtesy Boat Inspection program at the Maine Public Boat Launch. After struggling with staffing and coverage in 2023, the GELIA board raised compensation, an approach which has worked at other lakes. The Point Person duties were also transitioned from Lindsey Berube to Jodi Carlberg. (We wish Lindsey great success in her studies in the Midwest.) In 2024, the Lake Hosts performed 2830 inspections, six plant fragments were discovered, none were from invasive species. GELIA thanks all the Lake Hosts for a successful season.

In 2024, GELIA received grants from the Town of Wakefield and the states of New Hampshire and Maine, the majority of the funding comes from Membership Dues. GELIA thanks our membership for their financial support.

## Legislative Updates

*By Rich Sigel*

### Maine

**Wake boat distances from shore.** In 2024, the Maine Legislature passed a law (LD 2884) that prohibits a motorboat engaging in wake surfing within 300 feet of shore and in water less than 15 feet deep. The 300 foot limit was a compromise from the original bill, which sought a 500 foot limit. The Maine Lakes Association writes, “We believe there is space for everyone on Maine’s lakes. Reducing impacts from activities that erode shores and damage habitat by moving them away from the shore is a great way to keep that activity on the lake and to protect the resource, clean water, that is no vital to our boating industry.”

**New age and training requirements for motorboats and personal watercraft.** Maine now requires that anyone operating a motorboat with greater than 25 horsepower must (1) be at least 12 years of age and (2) have completed a boater safety and education course. In addition, anyone operating a personal watercraft must (1) be at least 16 years of age and (2) have completed a boater education course. People born before 1999 are grandfathered from these new requirements. For more information about the new rules and boater safety courses, go to: [www.maine.gov/ifw/programs-resources/educational-programs/safety-courses/boating-safety.html](http://www.maine.gov/ifw/programs-resources/educational-programs/safety-courses/boating-safety.html)

### New Hampshire

**Wake boat distance from shore law fails.** The New Hampshire legislature failed to reach agreement on legislation that would have increased the distance from shore requirements for wake surfing, which remains the same as all other headway speed distances for motorized craft, 150 feet.

**New fertilizer restrictions.** The New Hampshire legislature passed HB 1293, overriding the Governor’s veto. The bill is intended to protect water quality by prohibiting people from applying fertilizer during or before a heavy rain in order to limit runoff, and also prohibits application of fertilizers within 25 feet of storm drains or bodies of water.

**New registration decal requirements.** The New Hampshire legislature passed HB1304, which requires the display of a secondary round decal indicating payment of boat fees in addition to the regular registration decal. NH Boat registrants will receive both decals as part of the registration process.

# Invasive Plant Survey Update

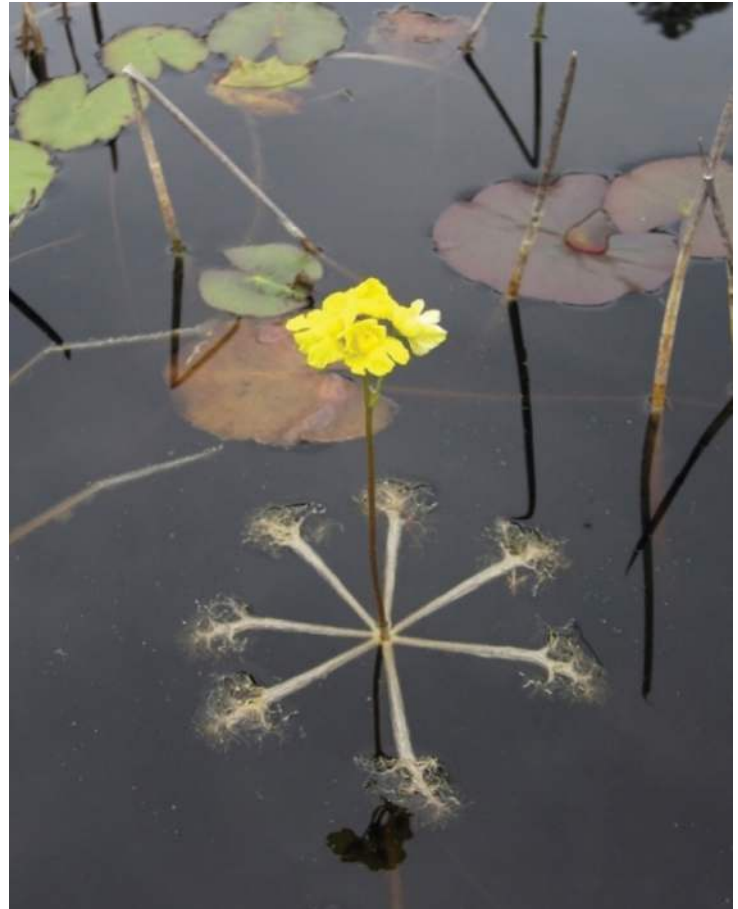
By Charles Crespi

2024 was a busy year for invasive plant surveys. After the discovery of Swollen Bladder Wort in Mousam Lake and Pine River Pond last year. We added surveys in late May / early June and early November, looking for the characteristic flower (see picture on right) of Swollen Bladder Wort (native Bladder Worts bloom in late July/early August). No characteristic Swollen Bladder Wort flowers were observed around the Maine Boat Ramp and selected coves.

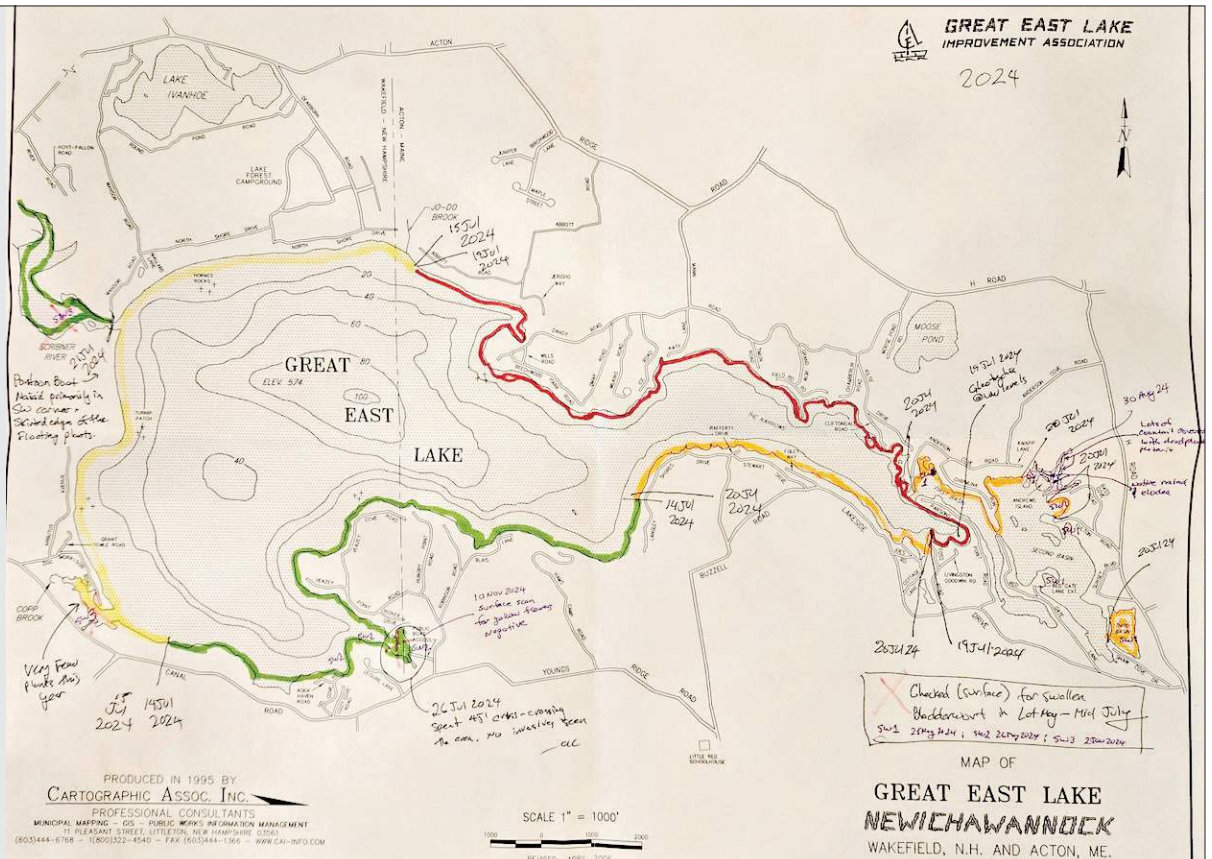
In July and August, numerous volunteers participated in our regular Weed Patrol with the Weed Warrior pontoon boat. The Maine Boat Launch was surveyed twice due to less-than-ideal lighting conditions for the first attempt. The pontoon boat navigable portions of Scribner River were surveyed in 2024. **No invasive plants were found.**

See map below where the data was recorded—different colors are used only to distinguish different days.

This effort was made possible by your membership dues and dozens of volunteers who devoted a few hours to view our beautiful lake bottom and call out anything which might be suspicious. Thank you.



The map shows the survey path of Weed Patrol pontoon boat. Colors are used only to distinguish the different survey days. For an enlarged view of this map, use the QR code below to see this newsletter on our website.



## Water Quality and Cyanobacteria

By Charles Crespi

The scientists from UNH were on the lake four times this year sampling water and taking measurements. We will get the report next spring or early summer.

The report for 2023 was published earlier this year. 2023 was a rainy summer and it showed in the measurements. As you know, storm run-off washes nutrients (phosphorus) into the lake. The water clarity was eight meters, the lowest value since 2005. In recent years the clarity has been over ten meters. The total phosphorus, the most important nutrient, was 4.8 ppb, down slightly from 2022 but up from the period from 2017 to 2022. Chlorophyll levels were up, likely the result of the elevated phosphorus promoting plant growth.

Together with Don Kretchmer, a lake scientist) we established twelve tributary sampling locations around Great East Lake. We also installed two flow meters. We have started taking water samples for analysis of phosphorus levels. The goal is to better understand the flow of phosphorus into the lake and develop better plans to manage phosphorus pollution. Due to the lack of rain (many of the tributaries were dry), sampling and calibration of the flow meters has proceeded slowly. We hope to provide more information in the Spring Newsletter.

In mid-August there were some areas of elevated cyanobacteria in the Second Basin, primarily the shore along Fulton Road. The variety was Planktothrix, which typically looks like flecks of green paint either on the surface or in the water column. I observed only trace amounts on September 6th and none thereafter. In late August, relatively low levels (widely dispersed white clusters) of the variety Gloeotrichia were observed in the main lake near Veazey Point.

Whatever lake you are entering always assess the condition of water before entering. Harmful levels of Cyanobacteria are readily observable to the trained eye. Harmful levels of Gloeotrichia will give the water the appearance of dilute milk. Planktothrix forms green flakes in the water column or on the surface. One should also be suspicious of anything which looks like pollen in the water after the pine pollen clears up in June. I will write more about this topic in the Spring Newsletter.

## Nominating Committee Report

By Tom Lynch

The Nominating Committee had a pretty quiet year in 2024 compared to the last couple of years. At the July 2024 Annual Meeting, GELIA Members approved the nomination of Cheryl Peters to join the Board of Directors for a first two year term, so welcome aboard, Cheryl.

In addition, the Members voted to elect Mike Russo to serve a second two year term on the Board, and for Carol Ward and Rich Segal to serve their third and final two year terms as Directors.

The July Annual Meeting also saw the retirement of three veteran Board Members, all having served ten year terms, the maximum allowed under GELIA's By-Laws. They are: Dave Mankus, Susi Alvino, and John Crespi. All three of these folks are knowledgeable, sensible, and have done lots of work over the years for the benefit of GELIA and this lake. We owe them our gratitude. We're truly sorry to see them leave the Board but that is the nature of term limits. Speaking of term limits, it is because of them that there is a steady need to new Members to join the GELIA Board. If any members have the time and interest to help protect our lake, please contact us through our newly enhanced GELIA website at [greastlake.org](http://greastlake.org). A number of people have already done so and we be in touch in the new year.

### Board Members

For the term July 2024 through July 2025

#### President

Charles Crespi

#### Directors

Lindsey Berube

#### Vice President

Dana Bridges

Jenn Dropski

Effie Jaramillo

Dan Kraft

#### Treasurer

Sergio Jaramillo

Jeffrey Lebida

Tom Lynch

Scott Matheson

#### Secretary

David Upton

Cheryl Peters

Mike Russo

Rich Sigel

Bob Stearns

Carol Ward

Doug Wood



## Water Quality Fun Facts

By Charles Crespi

In a prior article I discussed the importance of phosphorus for water quality and how it can be mobilized from lake sediments. Land use also has a large impact on the phosphorus in a lake.

Why? Our nutrient-poor soils have a large capacity to bind phosphorus. If runoff has the opportunity to soak into the ground, the vast majority of the phosphorus in the runoff chemically binds to aluminum and iron compounds in the soil and becomes effectively locked-up. The now-purified groundwater then makes its way either into tributaries or percolates through the soil to enter the lake. If runoff does not have the opportunity to soak into the ground, the phosphorus is carried directly into the tributaries and the lake.

The natural state for the Great East Lake watershed is forest. A forest floor is naturally irregular as a result of tree roots on the surface, trees falling, animals burrowing and other natural processes. Stormwater pools in these depressions, soaks into the ground and is purified. When the land is cleared of trees and flattened for fields, roads, driveways, and other man-made structures, the new surfaces created are flat and often water-impervious. As a result, more phosphorus-bearing runoff enters lakes and tributaries. More phosphorus leads to lower water quality.

How can development be more water quality friendly?

- Minimize tree clearing, keep as much as possible of the forest in its natural state.
- Practice sustainable timber harvesting. A key feature is leaving the stumps.
- Include features which slow down runoff and give the water more time to soak into the soils. These include:
  - Don't leave exposed soils
  - Replant with native, woody vegetation
  - Include a dripline trench with structures
  - Collect runoff in a rain garden
  - Install infiltration steps
  - Many properties around Great East Lake have these features and they all contribute to Great East Lake's superior water quality

Questions? AWWA can provide technical guidance. Visit [www.awwatershed.org](http://www.awwatershed.org) for detailed tutorials.

## Our Membership Year in Review

By Effie Jaramillo

GELIA membership was strong this calendar year with 375 members contributing over \$58,600. Thank you for your consideration and generosity! In comparison to last calendar year 2023, we are down \$7,820 and down 57 members. Looking ahead to next season, we can surely make up the difference and exceed those totals. Thank you for all the Volunteers and New Members, we appreciate you.

### Why Lake Association Membership Matters

Living by a lake in Maine or New Hampshire is a unique privilege, with access to natural beauty, recreational activities, and a close-knit community. However, with this privilege comes the responsibility to protect and sustain these precious environments. That's where membership in a local lake association plays a crucial role.

### Supporting Lake Health and Conservation

Lake associations work hard to protect water quality, and manage invasive species that threaten the delicate ecosystem. Membership dues directly support these efforts by funding initiatives like water testing, our Lake Host Program that checks watercrafts going into the lake at the public dock. This is our first defense against invasive species that can harm the lake. Therefore, we can maintain the lake's health and beauty.

### Membership Benefits and Responsibilities

Membership dues vary and help cover the cost of important lake maintenance and supporting our Lake monitoring Pontoon boat run by volunteers. By joining, you're helping ensure that the lake remains a place of enjoyment and beauty for future generations. Plus, you'll stay informed about any lake-related issues, from water quality updates to recreational guidelines.

**Your membership isn't just a payment—it's a commitment to protecting a shared resource that impacts property values, recreational opportunities, and local wildlife.**

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**Photo excerpt from  
*Newichawannock Reflections***

*This unique gazebo, pictured about 1880, stood on the Dow/Bancroft property.*

*It offered spectacular views of the lake and surrounding mountains.*

*Photo courtesy of Chris Bancroft*