



Memphremagog Watershed Association

Fall Edition 2013

www.memphremagogwatershedassociation.com

Basic membership
for family or
business
remains at \$25

Other Memberships:

- Student \$5
- Sponsor \$50
- Patron \$100

We welcome all new members and thank you for your support and involvement

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President's Letter

A watershed is defined as an area of land over which all the surface water drains to a specific waterbody. Memphremagog Watershed stretches from Craftsbury to Newport Town and Newport City, from Island Pond to Morgan and Derby, covering 687 square miles, 71% in Vermont and 29% in Quebec. The watershed includes at least twenty lakes and ponds, three major tributaries, and a large number of smaller tributaries located in over a dozen municipalities. All rivers and streams therein drain into Lake Memphremagog. What binds us together and gives us a sense of place and identity is water. And what keeps us healthy and is critical to our economic health is the quality of our water.

In a recent article in The Record by David Deen, River Steward for the Connecticut River Watershed Council, entitled An Idea for Watershed Governance, Mr. Deen asks the question, "What if we changed our units of local government away from the land grant towns.... replacing town boundary lines on a map with the boundaries of watersheds?" He argues that such organization would make the watershed the point of departure for discussions, planning or development decisions. It would eliminate the often limited, confusing, and sometimes conflicting actions of individual town jurisdictions.

While MWA is not arguing for such a reorganization, we recognize the need to discuss, plan, and act on a watershed level. And in order to achieve our mission we must help all those in our watershed to build a sense of "watershed identity" and to work together to improve water quality for all in the watershed. This past summer, MWA hosted and/or collaborated on a number of programs designed to bring the watershed together and help foster that identity, including the Watershed Workshop (see enclosed article), Septic Socials, and our focus on wetlands. Next year we plan to continue those efforts. We are also preparing a Watershed Grant proposal that focuses on outreach and education to the entire watershed concerning water quality issues important to both local communities and the watershed in its entirety. Look for more on these initiatives as well as specific information in our Spring Newsletter. Until then, we'll enjoy the winter and look forward to spring.



Projects Committee members busy at Clyde River Buffer trimming and planting more trees and native flowers.

Watershed Workshop

In August, MWA held its first Watershed Workshop. The primary goal of the workshop, held at the East Side Restaurant, was to provide an opportunity for members of lake associations in the watershed to attend an informational program and to be able to get together to discuss common issues, share ideas and plan collaboratively during the workshop and over lunch. Key-note speaker Amy Picotte, Lakeshore Manager with VT Department of Environmental Conservation, presented the new state-wide Lake Wise Program. The VT Agency of Natural Resources program awards lake-friendly shoreland property by certifying that a property is well managed, using Best Management Practices. To date seventeen shoreland properties in the watershed have been awarded the Lake Wise certification, including properties on Echo, Willoughby, and Seymour lakes.

(amy.picotte@state.vt.us).

Also presenting were Ben Copans, Basin 17 VT DEC Watershed Coordinator, and Art Brooks of Westmore Association (Lake Willoughby). Ben talked about tactical planning in the watershed in order to manage and improve water quality. Art, a retired professor emeritus, gave a short course in Limnology 101 (the study of lakes) that fascinated all who attended.

Represented at the workshop were lakes Salem, Willoughby, Seymour, Echo, Shadow, Hosmer Ponds, Memphremagog, and from beyond the watershed Lake Eden and Harvey's Pond. MWA plans to host our second annual workshop next year.

Lake Shoreland Protection Commission public meetings

During the 2013 legislative session H.526, the Shorelands Protection Act, passed the House and was sent to the Senate Natural Resources and Energy Committee. The bill did not make it out of committee. Sensing the need for more public input in order to craft a better law, the legislature established the Lake Shoreland Protection Commission. The Commission was charged with holding public meetings during the summer and fall. The first meeting was in Newport on August 9th, following the MWA Watershed Workshop. Subsequent meetings were held in Rutland, Fairlee, Middlebury, North Hero, and Burlington. The last public meeting will be in Montpelier in January, 2014 at a time and date to be determined. The common theme throughout the meetings has been the limited scope of the bill. Rather than question the need for protecting our lake shorelands, the public has asked why agriculture, septic systems, rivers and streams are not part of the bill. The bill will be back in the Senate in 2014. Information may be found on the legislature's website.



WETLANDS are inundated by surface or ground water with a frequency sufficient to support plants and animals that depend on such soil conditions for growth and reproduction. Ponds, bogs, fens, marshes, wet meadows, shrub swamps and wooded swamps are typical wetlands. Wetlands serve many beneficial functions: flood control, water quality protection, wildlife habitat, endangered species habitat, hydrophytic vegetation habitat, educational resources, aesthetics, recreation, fisheries habitat and erosion control. In July MWA hosted a wetlands paddle in Eagle Point Wildlife Management Area, led by Paul Hamelin, Wildlife Biologist.

This fall, NorthWoods Stewardship Center trail crew constructed Boardwalk #1 in the Eagle Point Wildlife Management Area. MWA contributed \$500 to support this work. Hope is that Boardwalk #2 will be completed before snow flies!



How can we protect water quality in the lakes of our watershed?

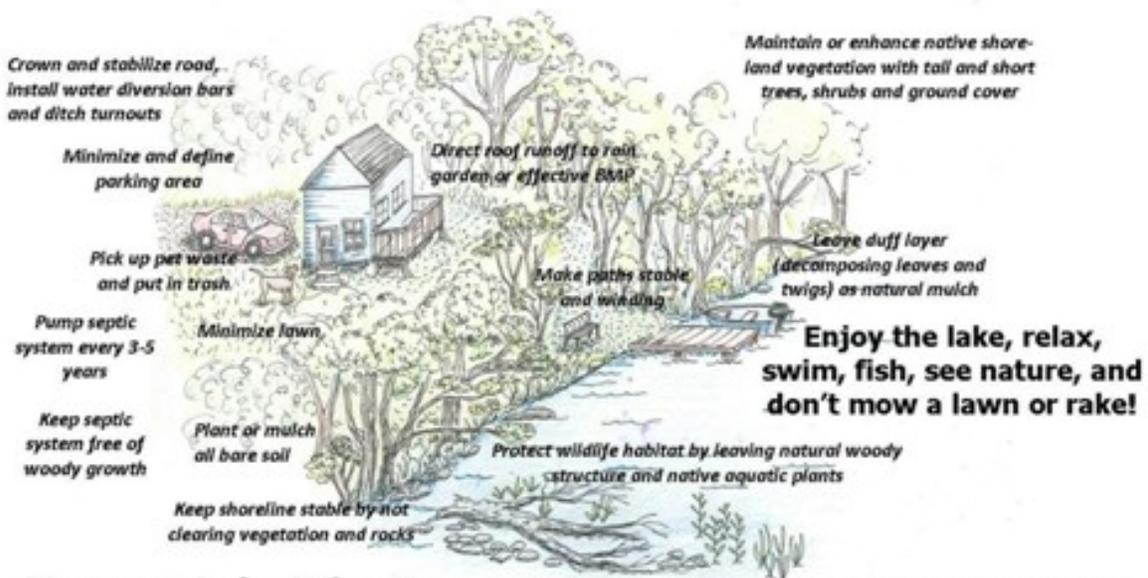
This question has been in the news and on many of our minds over the past year, as the Vermont legislature considers a shoreland protection bill. Meanwhile, our friends at the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and in the Federation of Vermont Lakes and Ponds (FOVLAP) launched two educational programs that encourage lakeshore property owners to make changes—small changes that will have big impacts if many people implement them.

Lake Wise Vermont, introduced last summer by the Lakes and Ponds Section of VT-DEC, provides technical assistance to promote shoreland practices that protect water quality and wildlife habitat. Experts from the DEC will visit your property as friendly consultants to consider how best to manage recreation areas, driveways, structures, septic systems, and shorefront. Properties that reflect best practices in all these areas receive a Lake Wise Award, and lake associations with a high percentage of Lake Wise properties become eligible for the Lake Wise Gold Award.

Buffers for Blue Waters, a program funded by Watershed Grants to FOVLAP, supports lakeshore property owners in the process of creating vegetated buffer zones. During the summer of 2013, Buffers for Blue Waters provided workshops and blueberry bushes to multiple landowners on Seymour Lake, Echo Lake, and Lake Memphremagog, as well as to Newport's Community Gardens program. The organizers of Buffers for Blue Waters hope that landowners will continued to add new plantings to their lakeshores each year.

To learn more about Lake Wise Vermont, contact Amy.picotte@state.vt.us or 802-490-6128 For information about vegetating your lakeshore visit FOVLAP's website (<http://vermontlakes.org/lakescaping/>). Finally, to learn about relevant legislation pending in the Vermont Senate, visit the website of the Shoreland Protection Commission (<https://leg2.vermont.gov/sites/legislature/LSP/default.aspx>).

This Property is Lake Wise! Typical of many Vermont lakeshore homes, this house was built too close to the lake to allow for the best standard of lake protection -- a 100 foot wide vegetated shore -- but fortunately, this landowner is using all the lake friendly practices below to protect the lake.



Vermont Lake Wise Program - Vermont Agency of Natural Resources

2014 Ecosystem Restoration Grant

MWA has received a 2014 Ecosystem Restoration grant for a comprehensive Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination (IDDE) study of the stormwater management system in the City of Newport, Derby, Barton, Orleans, and Brighton. The purpose of the study is to identify and eliminate contamination with the stormwater management system including nutrients, bacteria, petroleum compounds and other pollutants discharging to Lake Memphremagog and its tributaries. The goal of the project is to eliminate illicit discharges into stormwater systems that may pose a public health risk and also contribute to phosphorus pollution entering Lake Memphremagog which currently exceeds its phosphorus standard and is classified as impaired by the state. The grant amount was for approximately \$50,000, although the total grant money may be increased as Brighton was not included in the original proposal. MWA will hire a private consulting firm to complete the project; however, there may be opportunity for volunteer help. Work will begin in the spring of 2014 with an end date of May, 2015. This is our largest and most ambitious grant to date and may lead to further similar grants.

MWA Scholarship

MWA's 2013 scholarship recipient Gina Basiliere is attending the University of Vermont, studying Environmental Science. Her goal is to go on to Architecture, focusing on the design of green buildings using renewable and ecologically friendly materials. We wish her success.

Applications for the 2014 MWA scholarship will be due the end of March.



MWA Float featuring Wetlands won 2nd Prize in the Derby 4th of July Parade.

Photo credits go to Valarie Dillon, Paul Hamelin and Sylvia Beauregard.

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