



McGrath Pond – Salmon Lake Association

Stewards of Our Belgrade Lakes

Spring 2023 Newsletter

Photo – David Sandmel

President's Message

By Lenny Reich

It was a rather mild fall and winter here on McGrath Pond and Salmon Lake. The ponds didn't ice over until late December. As I write this and look out my window in early April, warm days have begun to darken the surface of Salmon Lake, a sure sign that ice-out is not far away. The creeping certainty of climate change has shortened the lakes' annual period of ice cover, and as the years go on it will present us with greater challenges keeping McGrath and Salmon clear and clean. Fortunately, MPSLA, working with its partner 7 Lakes Alliance, will be here to help.

Some good news is that the lakes' water-quality profiles were notably better last summer than the year before. That previous year was quite rainy, with a brief cold snap in early summer that seems to have caused a mixing of waters in Salmon Lake, bringing phosphorus up into the water column and causing an early-season bloom.

We're very pleased that last year's data show an improvement back to the norm but are concerned it could happen again. The best preventative, as always, is finding ways to keep phosphorus and other nutrients out of our lakes. If you think your property might be contributing some of those nutrients, call (207) 314-0881 or email khallee@gwi.net for a free LakeSmart evaluation. It's a great way to find out how to protect these lakes we love.

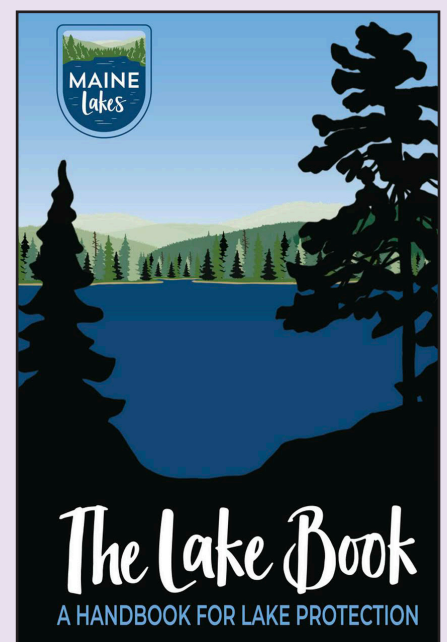
One comprehensive source of information about lakes protection available to everyone who cares about Maine lakes is the much-awaited 4th edition of "The Lake Book: A Handbook for Lake Protection," put out by the statewide organization Maine Lakes. You can read it online and download it to your device for free, or order your own spiral-bound hard copy for \$8.50. Here's the address: www.lakes.me/lakebook.

For a graphic two-page primer on lakes-protection, be sure to see "How Can We Help the Lakes?" in this Newsletter. It was brainstormed over this past winter by the Lakes Trust group of all five lake associations in the Belgrades, with graphics by Lizzy Gallagher of 7 Lakes Alliance. 7 Lakes is printing up numerous copies to distribute around the area.

In addition to phosphorus, nitrogen, and other "usual suspects" that can cause our lakes to cloud up and "bloom" with algae, we've recently grown concerned about other, more chemically complex adulterants getting into the water. You've no doubt heard about contamination from per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, generally known as PFAS, a diverse group of chemicals used in a wide range of products and often found in waste-treatment plant sludge that's been spread on farmers' fields all over



Lenny Reich – President



Maine, including the former Bickford dairy farm on Rt. 8 in North Belgrade. That farm contributed much of the phosphorus in Salmon Lake's deep sediments, which, it now appears, could be laden with PFAS. The Maine DEP plans to do clean-up work at the Bickford farm next year, and we should learn more about the extent of the contamination.

Up on McGrath Pond, the problem is more subtle and less certain. As you will read in this Newsletter, an unusually high water quality indicator called Specific Conductance led MPSLA to a water testing program that strongly suggests the old Oakland landfill on Town Farm Road is the source of some kind of contamination. As yet, though, we don't know what is actually getting into the pond because the next phase of testing is expensive, and we needed enough certainty about the source before committing to do those tests, which will commence with warm weather and open water. We'll let you know when we have more to share.

I should mention that this Newsletter is the first of two you'll see during 2023, breaking our recent pattern of a single large annual issue. The Board of Directors sent out a questionnaire this past March asking members, among other things, whether they preferred one large or two smaller Newsletters each year. About three-quarters of those who responded voted for the latter, and so that's what you'll get. Look for another, somewhat shorter Newsletter, in early fall this year.

A request that came from a number of members in the questionnaire was for a summer get-together in addition to the Annual Meeting, preferably in the form of a barbeque or pot-luck supper. We're on! Look for the listing under "Upcoming Events" on page 15 and please RSVP to join your fellow members the evening of July 20th for a combination barbeque pot-luck supper by the shore of McGrath Pond.

One other thing to look for, come December, is the 2024 McGrath Pond – Salmon Lake Calendar. We will be asking for lake photo submissions by MPSLA members, and from them we'll choose 12 to make up the calendar. There will be more information about the calendar in the fall Newsletter, but be sure to get some great photos in the mean time!

As always, a special thanks to everyone for efforts on behalf of our lakes.

Lenny Reich

lsreich@colby.edu



Getting in the Clean Water Act

By Anthony Wilson
Communications Director – 7 Lakes Alliance

Sue Feiner was at a loss. She wanted to protect McGrath Pond from the stormwater that rushed down her road, across her property, gashed the ground and swept phosphorus-laden dirt into the lake. But she and her husband were not prepared to spend \$13,000 to repair Woodrest Lane, the gravel road that was the source of the erosion issues.

The situation illustrates why 7 Lakes Alliance, together with MPSLA, annually applies for and administers Clean Water Act grants to address erosion damaging to our lakes' water quality. In the 2022-23 grant cycle, 7 Lakes received \$308,650 of these Federal funds through the Maine Department of Environmental Protection. Of that total, \$94,270 was earmarked for work in the McGrath Pond-Salmon Lake watershed, with \$67,000 allocated for repair and reconstruction of roads whose erosion was washing dirt into the lakes.

In fact, the impact of the grant funds is more than doubled because property owners, road associations, businesses, towns, and MPSLA itself contributed more than \$74,000 in matching funds and labor, yielding over \$140,000 for the actual work.

The grant-funded "remediation is without doubt the most important set of projects we've undertaken in three decades of work on our lakes," said Lenny Reich, MPSLA president. "7 Lakes Alliance staff have been central to that effort, from direct involvement in the formulation of our Watershed-Based Protection Plan that identifies properties needing work, to submission of grant proposals to Maine DEP, to hiring contractors and overseeing projects to completion."

Charlie Baeder, who administers the grant program for 7 Lakes, noted the most recent work keeps an estimated 93 tons of sediment (equivalent to about four dump truck loads) and 79 pounds of phosphorus out of the lakes annually. Phosphorus is a key nutrient for algae; too much in the lakes leads to algae blooms.



Anthony Wilson
7 Lakes Alliance



Charlie Baeder
7 Lakes Alliance
charlie.baeder@7lakesalliance.org

"I want to put myself out of a job by fixing things," Baeder said. "We would like to get out of the remediation business and focus on prevention."

In the case of Woodrest Lane, 1,500 feet of the road was re-crowned and re-ditched, and two new culverts added to channel storm water away from the lake. The impact was immediate and impressive, Feiner said. Where the water once cut deep rivulets as it rushed to the lake and left her driveway a muddy mess, "We had zero erosion last summer," she said.

"The work eliminated the problem," she added. "It was like a miracle."

The \$13,000 cost was split evenly between the grant and property owners along the road. Feiner called the grant funding "essential," saying the project could not have happened without the financial aid.

The process unfolded seamlessly and the results are "fabulous," Feiner said. "When it rains, you can tell there aren't thousands of gallons of water washing through the grass and cutting into the shoreline. It was good to have knowledgeable people walk the property and tell us what to do to protect the lake. Because we love the lake."

Baeder reported 7 Lakes still has some funds to spend around McGrath Pond and Salmon Lake for 2023. Explaining that there's "more work to do," Baeder said 7 Lakes plans to seek grant funding in 2024-25. He encouraged property owners experiencing erosion issues to contact 7 Lakes Alliance (207-495-6039 or charlie.baeder@7lakesalliance.org) to schedule an evaluation.



Before: Before Woodrest Lane was repaired using Clean Water Act grant funds, erosion and storm water runoff on the gravel road caused harmful dirt and phosphorus to wash into McGrath Pond. Phosphorus is a nutrient in soil on which algae feeds.



During: During the reconstruction of Woodrest Lane, the road was re-crowned and re-ditched, and two culverts were added. The \$13,000 cost was split between Clean Water Act grant funds and property owners along the road. 7 Lakes Alliance administered the grant and facilitated the work.

Rebuilding the Salmon Lake Dam

By Dick Greenan – Chair, Inter-local Dams Committee

The Inter-local Dams Committee is supported by the towns of Belgrade, Oakland, Rome, and Mt. Vernon, with volunteers from all of these towns maintaining and controlling the Salmon Lake dam, the Belgrade Lakes Village dam, which controls Great Pond levels, and the Wings Mill dam at the bottom of Long Pond. Last fall, the Committee worked with local contractor Steve Liberty to rebuild and improve the Salmon Lake dam.

Beaver activity, both above the Salmon Lake dam and sometimes downstream of it as well, had bedeviled Salmon Lake dam keepers for years. The beavers regularly deposited debris and clogged the upstream side of the dam, ruining its compliance with Maine DEP's mandated one cubic foot per second (CFS) of water flowing through the dam "to protect aquatic life in Hatchery Brook" below the dam.

With the dam itself leaking past the seals around its edges, and one of its two main steel panels needing replacement, the time had come for a rebuild — and also for a way to achieve that one CFS flow while bypassing the beavers' obstructions. The latter would be done with a metered valve placed in the face of dam, well below the surface of the outlet stream so that beaver debris would float harmlessly above it. When the main part of the dam was closed and sealed, one CFS of water could come shooting straight out the face of the dam like the open arm of a fire hydrant.



Installation of the temporary coffer dam



Installation of two 5/16" welded steel plates

In doing the rebuild this past October, contractor Steve Liberty replaced a 9'x10' steel panel, plus all the control cables and reinforced seals. The 9'x10' piece makes up a radial gate, constructed of two 5/16" welded steel plates with bolted-on steel and neoprene gaskets on three sides. Because of the need to work in a dry environment, the crew first had to build and install a 6'x6' cofferdam on the upstream side, a difficult and time-consuming job in itself. With Maine DEP's permission, the cofferdam stopped all water flow while the crew worked on the main part of the dam.

The Salmon Lake dam was last rebuilt in 2007. If history is a guide, our current rebuild — which took two weeks and cost \$26,240 — should last until about 2037.

The Salmon Lake dam is the only one of the three in the Inter-local Agreement that has the potential to cause downstream flooding, so its operation falls under the auspices of the Maine's Emergency Management Agency. As a result, the Dams Committee was required to maintain daily records of Salmon Lake's water levels and the dam's gate openings. This meant that one of the dam keepers had to visit the site daily, year around, to record these measurements. With the dam rebuild, we installed a digital Water Level Data Logger that gives us a daily update over the web with a report similar to those that we receive from our other dams, and daily trips to take measurements at the Salmon Lake dam are happily in the past.



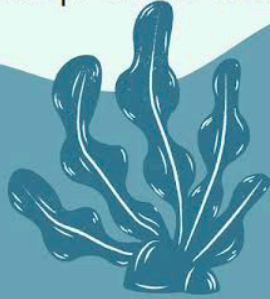
Salmon Lake Dam with the new 1 CFS metered valve

HOW CAN WE HELP THE LAKES?

DO:

LET SHORELAND PLANTS GROW

Trees, shrubs and plants prevent erosion, filter overland pollutants and provide habitat for wildlife.



LEAVE AQUATIC PLANTS ALONE

They provide oxygen and habitat for wildlife, they anchor sediments, and they help keep water clean. (Clearing a 10-foot-wide channel for lake access requires a state permit.)

PUMP SEPTIC TANKS

as needed and have the system inspected every 3-5 years.



SCOOP YOUR PET'S POOP

and put it in the trash.



USE ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY CLEANING SUPPLIES.

Whatever goes down the drain affects groundwater and may ultimately end up in the lake.

Use "green" cleaning products such as baking soda, borax or vinegar instead of chlorine-bleach scouring powders.

Use phosphate-free soaps and detergents that do not contain dyes, water softeners or synthetic fragrances.

SAVE THE SUDS FOR THE SHOWERS.

Soap contributes to algae blooms. Humans, dogs, cars and boats should not be washed in or near the lake.



CREATE WINDING PATHS TO THE LAKE

to keep rain and dirt from flowing into it.



RESPECT NO-WAKE ZONES.

Boats and other motorized watercrafts must not create wakes within 200 feet of shore.



(OVER)

MAINTAIN RESPECTFUL DISTANCES FROM WILDLIFE

particularly loons. Chasing wildlife is against the law. Report wildlife harassment to the Maine Warden Service 800-452-4664.



DO:

KEEP OUT INVASIVE AQUATIC PLANTS AND ANIMALS.

They create costly, irreversible infestations, threaten native species, and interfere with the lake's recreational uses. **For that reason:**

INSPECT YOUR BOAT WHEN ENTERING OR LEAVING THE LAKE

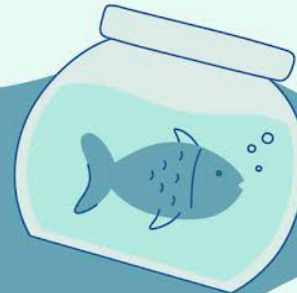
for plants and other organisms that have attached to trailers, boats or equipment. Drain and clean bilges, wells, coolers, snorkels, fishing equipment, etc. Trained Courtesy Boat Inspectors at public launch sites should be able to help.



DISPOSE OF UNUSED BAITFISH ON LAND in the trash.

NEVER RELEASE PLANTS, FISH, ANIMALS OR AQUARIUM MATERIALS

into a body of water unless they came from that waterbody.



USE NON-LEAD FISHING TACKLE

to avoid entangling or harming wildlife.

REMOVE SNAGGED FISHING LINE AND TACKLE

to avoid entangling or harming wildlife.



DON'T:

DO NOT MOVE OR REARRANGE ROCKS

near shorelines. They prevent erosion and provide habitat for aquatic wildlife.



NEVER DISPOSE OF ANYTHING ON THE GROUND OR IN THE WATER

including food, grease, ashes, etc.



DON'T OVERLOAD THE COMMUNE.

The number of a building's occupants, including day visitors, should not exceed a septic system's designed capacity. Do not flush materials other than toilet paper. Overuse or improper use could cause your septic system to fail, which can impact the lake.

DO NOT USE TOXIC CHEMICALS

including insecticides and drain cleaners.

McGrath Pond-Salmon Lake Association
www.mcgrathpond-salmonlake.org

For more information, contact 7 Lakes Alliance at 207-495-6039 or info@7lakesalliance.org. Visit us at 137 Main St. in the Belgrade Lakes village.

McGrath Pond Sampling Program

By the MPSLA Water Quality Committee

In 2021, MPSLA learned that an important water quality indicator in McGrath Pond is higher than in the other Belgrade Lakes. Further, the trend of the data over time shows this indicator has been rising slowly but steadily in McGrath Pond since the 1970s, with no sign of tapering off. Salmon Lake has some elevation also, which is not surprising, as it receives much of its water from McGrath Pond. The MPSLA Water Quality Committee has been investigating to find the cause.

Most Maine lakes have been sampled for basic water quality parameters since the early 1970s. One of them is Specific Conductance (SC), a measure of the water's ability to conduct an electric current. A high reading results from many ions in the water and can indicate the presence of contaminants, although that's not always the case. A high reading means that there are dissolved elements or molecules in the water (other than H₂O), whether their source is natural or artificial.

A review of both historic and recent data from the McGrath Pond sampling station at the deepest point in the lake indicates something about the possible source of high SC in the pond. Here, the level does not fluctuate substantially during the course of the year, telling us that deicing chemicals washing off the roads are not the primary cause. The multi-decade SC increase is likely related to groundwater entering the lake because the year-in, year-out steady readings indicate a constant rather than seasonal source.

Last spring we acquired a SC meter and used it to measure seven streams entering McGrath Pond. These streams convey surface-water runoff in wet weather. During dry periods, groundwater at the top of the water table seeps into the streambeds, maintaining a small flow. Measuring monthly from May to October 2022, we found that streams on the east side of the McGrath Pond have average SC readings about three times those of streams on the west and north sides (see map graphic).

This information leads us to focus on the Oakland solid waste facility on the east side of Town Farm Road, which included the town's open landfill until about 1990, when it was capped to minimize the infiltration of rainfall and snow melt. Water percolating through a landfill will pick up contaminants, and that "leachate" carries the contaminants into the groundwater. Although the landfill cap reduced the creation of new leachate, it's possible that leachate formed during landfilling, decades ago, made its way downhill, through the bedrock and overlying soil, and has been gradually reaching the lake.

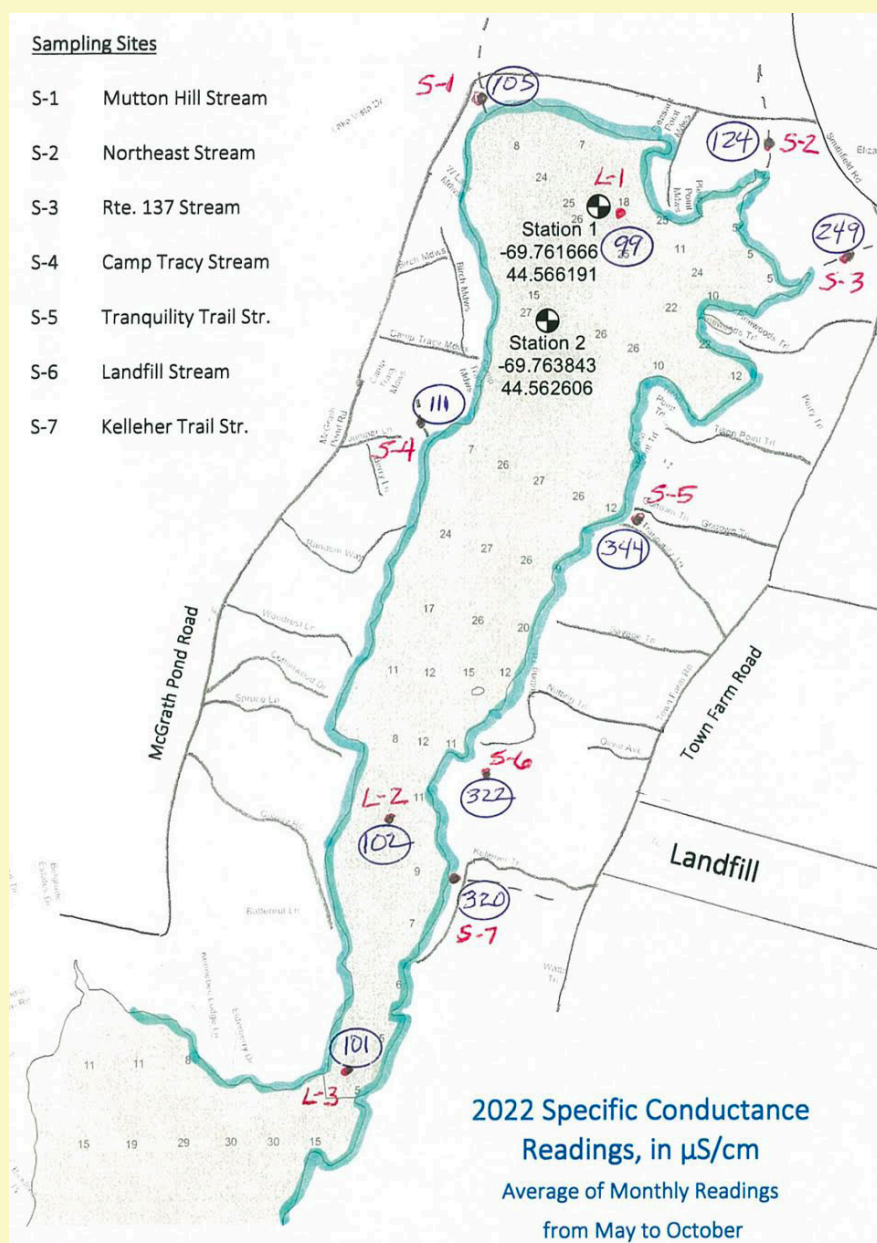
Twelve property owners provided us with laboratory test results for their potable wells, and those data show good quality water in the deep groundwater on both sides of the pond, down 200 to 300 feet. So, we believe the high SC water entering McGrath Pond is likely coming from shallow groundwater — and some surface water — in the eastern watershed.

Based on the information gathered so far, there's a need for further testing to determine what environmental impacts, if any, these inputs have on the lake, streams and nearby potable wells that are less than 200 feet deep. Our next step is to sample the lake, streams, and groundwater for elements and compounds that are typically found in landfill leachate, including PFAS ("forever chemicals").

So far, we have benefited from existing data, a donated meter, and volunteer efforts, with no direct cost to MPSLA. The next steps will require funding because the laboratory tests are rather expensive, and we will seek town and DEP assistance as we move forward.

Just as this article goes to press, we've learned that Maine DEP has conducted sampling in McGrath Pond focusing on landfill-specific contaminants. The preliminary results indicate PFAS compounds in McGrath Pond waters at just over nine parts per trillion (ppt), about one-half the state safe drinking water limit of 20 ppt. DEP has also measured PFAS compounds in fish flesh from McGrath Pond and found levels of concern in black crappie and largemouth bass. We expect to learn more details from DEP in the coming weeks.

As for MPSLA's sampling program going forward, once we have all the information we will consult with Maine DEP and the town of Oakland before deciding on the best course of action.



Water Quality Update

By Lizzy Gallagher
Assistant Lake Scientist – 7 Lakes Alliance

Monitoring by MPSLA and 7 Lakes Alliance in 2022 shows McGrath Pond and Salmon Lake continue to sit in the mesotrophic, aka medium, category for water quality (Table 1). Overall, water clarity was somewhat improved on both lakes in comparison with 2021. Water clarity increased by an average of 4.3 feet on McGrath Pond and 2.6 feet on Salmon Lake. Over the course of the summer, however, water clarity decreased as water temperatures increased on both lakes (Figure 1).



lizzy.gallagher@7lakesalliance.org

As has been typical, Salmon Lake experienced a fall algal bloom, with water clarity decreasing to approximately 10 feet in September, October and November. The reason this occurs in Salmon Lake but not in McGrath Pond is related to the lake's depth and can be seen in Figure 2. Salmon Lake becomes stratified during the summer, which means there are distinct layers at certain depths in the lake, with warmer water layers on the top and cooler water layers towards the bottom. During periods of stratification, the bottom of the lake becomes anoxic (without oxygen). Looking at Figure 2, the portions of the lake with low oxygen are shown in light brown. Anoxic water allows phosphorus, deposited over many decades, to emerge from the sediments. When cool fall nights send the top layer of water diving and mixing up the water column, phosphorus emerges up into sunlight, and the fall bloom occurs.

Although water quality improved this year on both lakes, variation from year to year is expected and is often influenced by the weather. This means McGrath and Salmon are not guaranteed another year of improved water quality. We need to be vigilant in protecting them. For ideas on how you can help protect the lakes, please visit 7lakesalliance.org.

Table 1: 2022 McGrath Pond and Salmon Lake Seasonal Averages and Trophic Status

	ME DEP Trophic Status Indicators			McGrath Pond Average (Range)	Salmon Lake Average (Range)
	Oligo- trophic	Meso- trophic	Eu-trophic		
Water Clarity (feet)	> 26.2	13.1 – 26.2	< 13.1	20.0 (10.2 – 23.6)	16.4 (9.2 – 25.6)
Surface Total Phosphorus (ppb)	< 4.5	4.5 - 20	> 20	9.7 (6.5 -18.5)	12.2 (6.8-28.4)

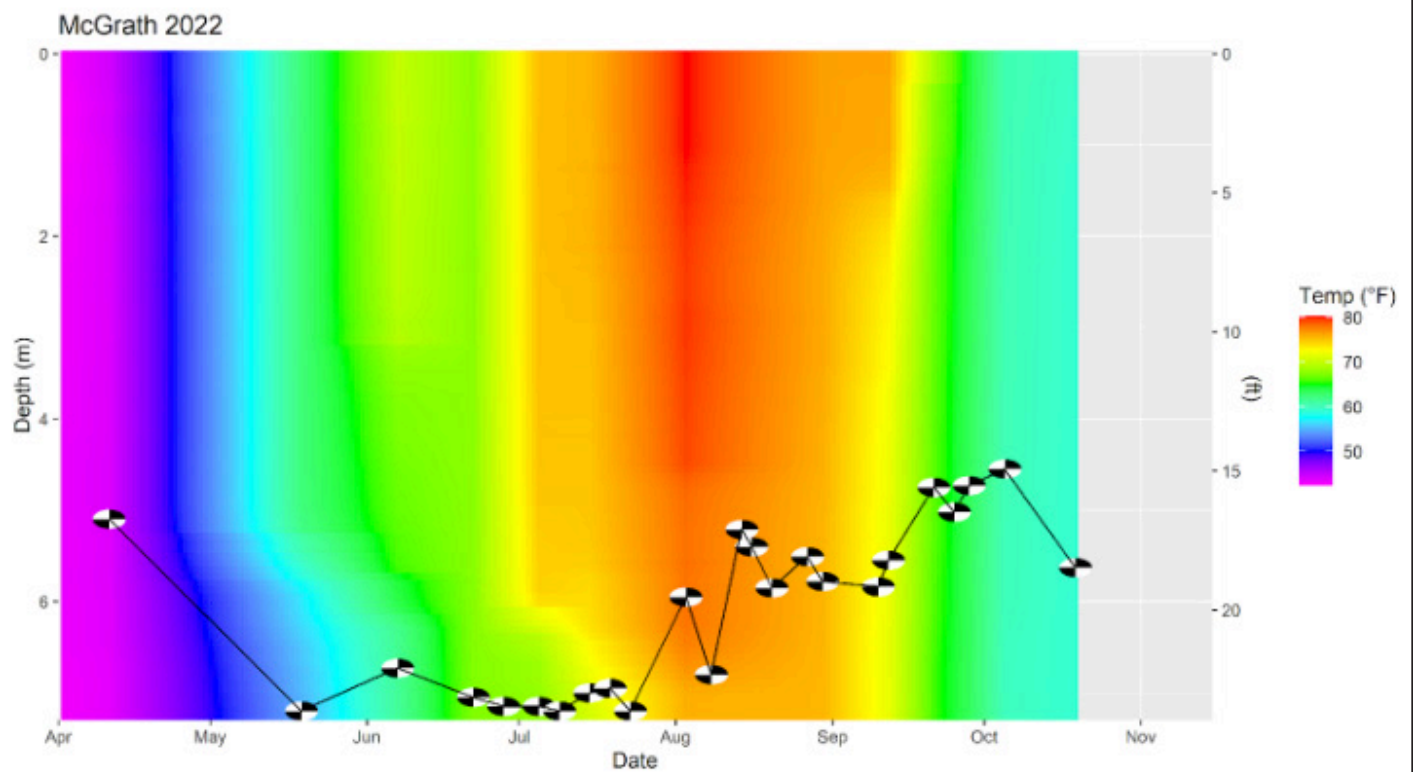
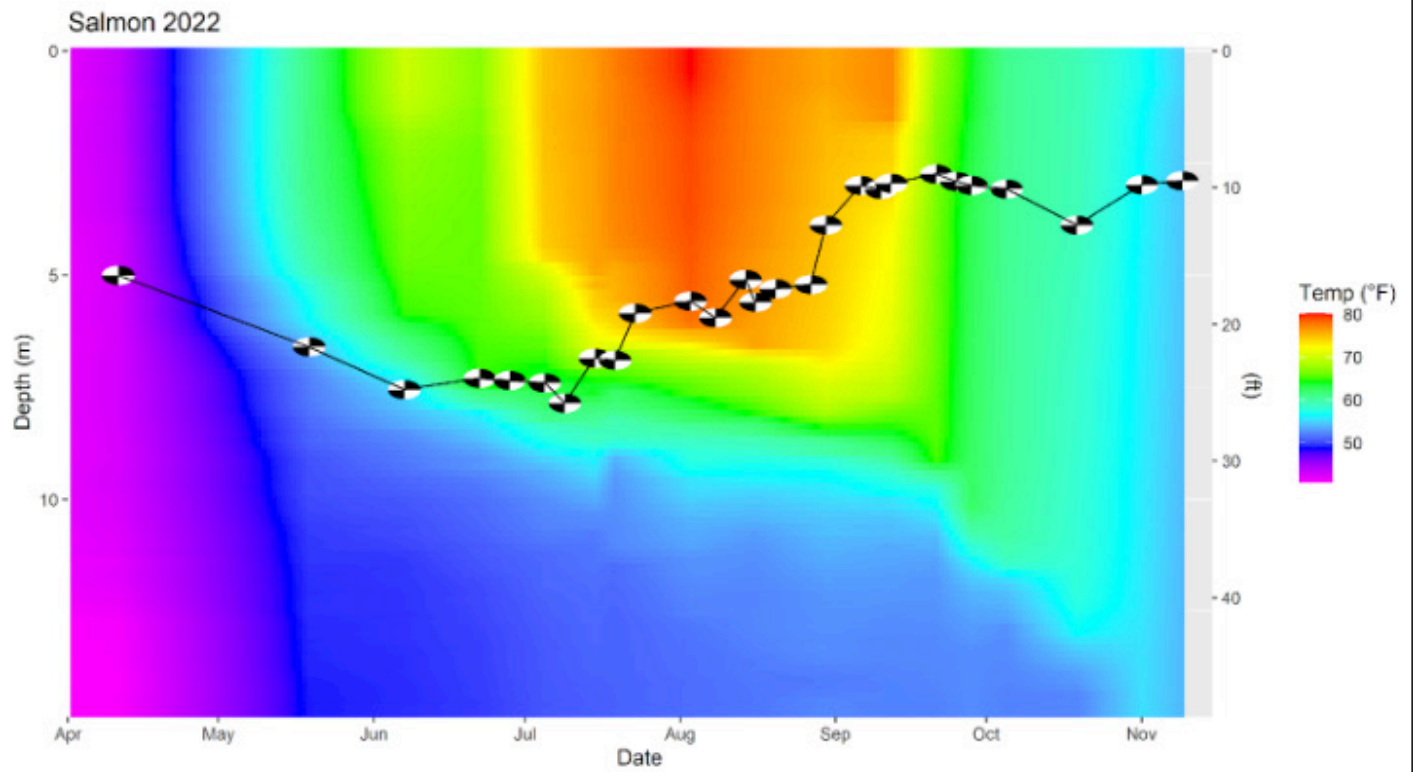


Figure 1: Temperature (°F) and water clarity/secchi depth (meters/feet) in Salmon Lake (top) and McGrath Pond (bottom) during 2022, displayed as water depth over time.

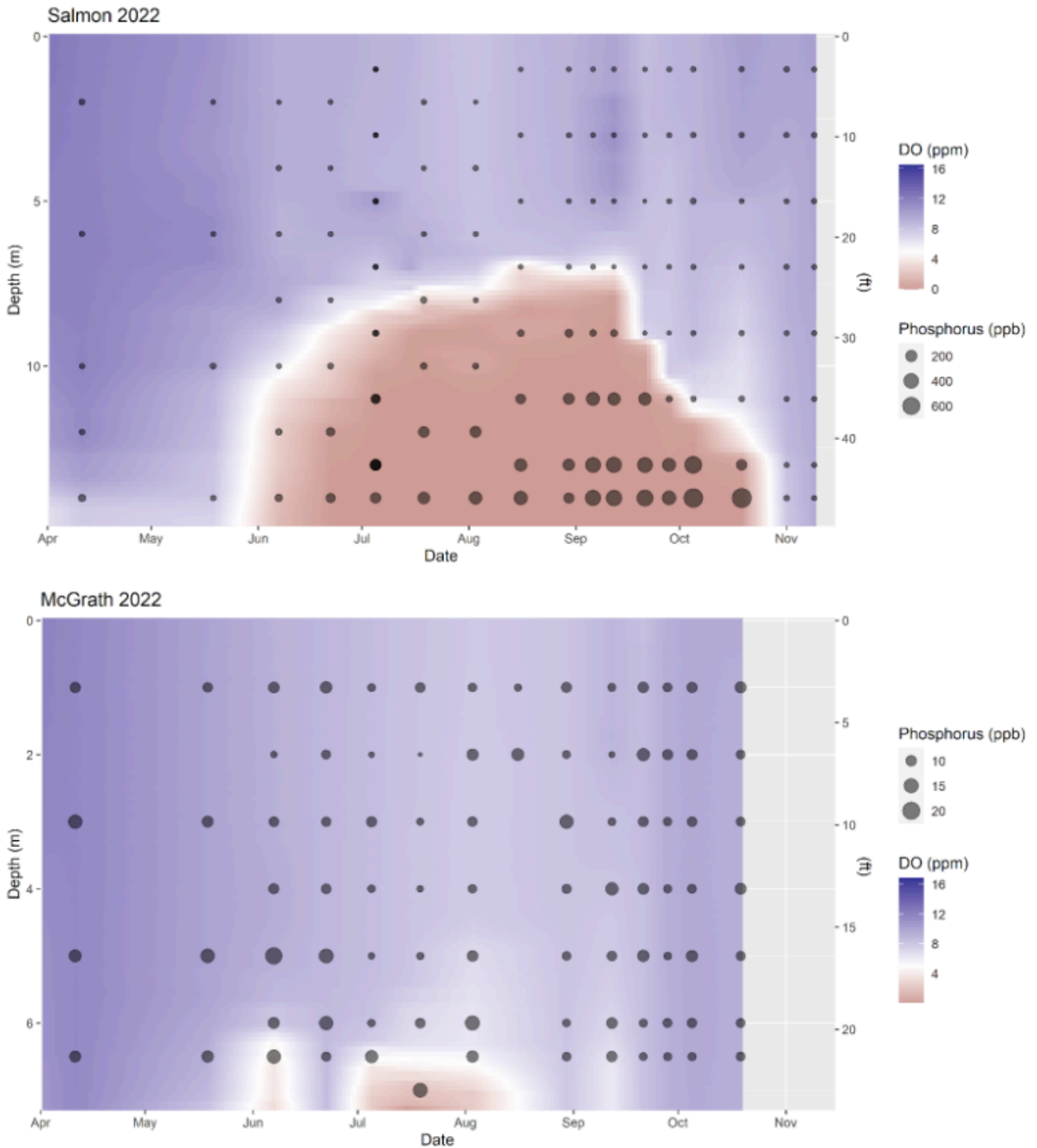


Figure 2: Dissolved Oxygen (parts per million) and phosphorus (parts per billion) in Salmon Lake (top) and McGrath Pond (bottom), displayed as water depth over time. Dissolved oxygen levels under 5 ppb (shown in light brown) represent conditions in which it is difficult for fish and other living organisms to survive. Salmon Lake has a longer period where there is low oxygen, creating conditions for phosphorus release, which leads to algal blooms.

Upcoming Events

July 4th – McGrath Pond Independence Day Flotilla

3:00 pm Pleasant Point Park

July 20th – MPSLA Barbeque & Pot-Luck Supper

5:30 pm on the shore of McGrath Pond

RSVP for directions: mpslassociation@gmail.com

August 10th – MPSLA Annual Meeting

Guest Speaker: Stuart Cole

Erosion Control Project Coordinator – 7 Lakes Alliance

The Youth Conservation Corps – They Really Dig It!

6:00 pm Pleasant Point Park

August 11th – Rain Date

Notification by 3 pm on FB and email

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Lenny Reich

President, Newsletter Editor
lsreich@colby.edu

David Sandmel

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dsandmel@gmail.com

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bsammons829@gmail.com

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cam.mccafferty@gmail.com

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robert.merrill148@gmail.com

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Smile Solutions
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Robert Taylor
The Thirsty Mule
Doak Wolfe & Gordon Smith
Woodrest Cottages

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McGrath Pond – Salmon Lake Association

Not a Member?

It isn't too late to join or renew!

Your name will be listed in the Fall Newsletter.

As members, your dues help fund:

Courtesy Boat Inspections

Invasive Plant Patrols

Water Quality Work of All Kinds

LakeSmart Evaluations and Programs

The Youth Conservation Corps

Education and Outreach Programs

Maintenance of the Narrows Preserve

Matching Funds for Federal Clean Water Act Grants

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

Individual – \$35

Family – \$50

Lake Steward — \$100

Watershed Steward — \$250

Lake Futurist — \$500

Watershed Futurist — \$1000+

To join or renew online, please go to
www.mcgrathpond-salmonlake.org/donate

If you prefer to pay by check, please see page 19 for the
MEMBERSHIP FORM

MPSLA is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.

Our Mission is to protect the natural character, enhance the water quality,
and promote the responsible use of the lakes for the benefit of ALL.

MPSLA
PO Box 576
Oakland, ME 04963
www.mcgrathpond-salmonlake.org



Annual Membership Form

For year 20_____ Name (s)_____

Preferred Mailing Address_____

Lake Address (if applicable) _____

Email_____ Phone _____

- ☐ I would like a paper copy of the newsletter (available on MPSLA's website by default).
- ☐ I wish to be listed as "anonymous" in the newsletter.

**Membership starts at \$35 for individuals
and \$50 for families.**

Business sponsorship starts at \$100.

Business Sponsors are featured on our
website, in our newsletter, and at the
annual meeting.

Please indicate your contribution level:

- ☐ \$35 Individual
- ☐ \$50 Family
- ☐ \$100 Lake Steward
- ☐ \$250 Watershed Steward
- ☐ \$500 Lake Futurist
- ☐ \$1000+ Watershed Futurist

Additional contribution:

- ☐ Project Funding (water quality, etc.) \$_____
- ☐ Courtesy Boat Inspection Program \$_____
- ☐ Frances Fox Sandmel Environmental Education Fund \$ _____
- ☐ Gift Membership \$_____ For _____

Total enclosed: _____ + _____ = \$_____

Membership Additional TOTAL

✓ **Make checks payable to "MPSLA" and mail to: MPSLA, PO Box 576, Oakland, ME 04963**

Please contact me about:

- ☐ Serving on the MPSLA Board of Directors (out-of-state residents welcome!)
- ☐ Becoming a Volunteer Courtesy Boat Inspector
- ☐ Getting my property evaluated for LakeSmart certification

THANK YOU!

MPSLA is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

Find us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/MPSLAssoc

Email address: outreach@mcgrathpond-salmonlake.org

McGrath Pond - Salmon Lake Association
PO Box 576
Oakland, ME 04963

Our mission is to preserve and protect the natural character, enhance the water quality, and promote the responsible use of the lakes for the benefit of all.

[Website: mcgrathpond-salmonlake.org](http://mcgrathpond-salmonlake.org)
[Facebook: facebook.com/MPSLAssoc](https://facebook.com/MPSLAssoc)
email: outreach@mcgrathpond-salmonlake.org

Please send us an email if you would like to receive a paper copy of the newsletter.

Thank You!