

FRIENDS OF PONTOOSUC LAKE

NEWSLETTER

May 2013

ANNUAL MEETING AT ITAM LODGE

TUESDAY, MAY 28 at 7:00 P. M.

The annual meeting of The Friends of Pontoosuc will be held Tuesday, May 28. Agenda will include herbicide results and plans, water chestnut control, Zebra mussel threat, lake level control, the annual drawdown, and others.

All are invited to attend. Bring any questions or concerns you have about the care and management of Pontoosuc Lake and Watershed, and the operation of our lake association.

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Hello to all the Friends of Pontoosuc. This letter is a brief overview of our activities and challenges. Please provide feedback and any help you can.

CONTROL OF INVASIVE PLANTS

The 2012 herbicide treatment was quite successful; See Gordon's article below for details. The program is funded jointly by Pittsfield and Lanesborough, splitting the cost 50:50. The money has been appropriated by both the City and the Town in their respective fy2013 budgets for the summer 2013 work. However, we must take action now to secure funding for the 2014 treatment, and have requested \$10,000 each from Lanesborough and Pittsfield in the fy2014 budgets. The Lanesborough 2014 budget is very tight, and the decisions on what gets funded will be made at the annual town meeting. **Lanesborough voters, please attend the Town meeting, Tuesday, June 12 at the Lanesborough School, and support our budget request. We need your yes vote. Pittsfield voters, encourage your city council members to support the lake budget.** We are in the third year of a three year contract with Aquatic Control Technology for herbicide application, so this winter we will have to go out to bid for another three-year contract in order to have numbers for the Town and City budgets next spring. It is possible that the price will increase and we may have to work hard to keep the program funded.

There have been some complaints expressed about the effectiveness of the herbicide control particularly in the northeast cove. The timing of the herbicide application is intended to check the Eurasian Milfoil and Curly leaf Pondweed, and the dominant plant in that cove in mid to late summer is European Naiad. This species is an annual and many of the plants do not grow enough to be susceptible to the herbicide until mid-summer, so unfortunately, there is a significant growth in late summer. Application of the herbicide later in the season might check the problem, but it would leave the lake choked with the other weeds species in June, and would increase the biomass of plants decaying after herbicide application which exacerbates the oxygen depletion problem in the lake. A second application would check the problem but would be expensive, and require closing the lake again in the busy lake use season. We will monitor the situation closely this summer and discuss options with ACT.

PONTERIL DEVELOPMENT

Someone has bought the property and is developing it as a private boat club, and possibly more. We have received some questions about this, so Jim McGrath will give an update and answer questions at the annual meeting

Cont on page 5

LEGISLATION ENACTED TO PROTECT MASSACHUSETTS LAKES

In early January, Governor Patrick signed into law *An Act protecting lakes and ponds from aquatic nuisances*, legislation championed by State Senator Benjamin B. Downing. The new law, Chapter 444 of the Acts of 2012, seeks to protect the Commonwealth's uncontaminated lakes and ponds by preventing the spread of zebra mussels and other aquatic nuisances, addressing an issue of great importance for boaters, sportsmen and lake groups in the Berkshires and western Massachusetts.

The Act is based on the recommendations of the state's Zebra Mussel Task Force, tasked by the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs in 2009 to author a zebra mussel action plan. The Task Force determined that under existing law state environmental agencies do not possess the necessary enforcement authority to manage the immediate and long-term effect of zebra mussels, or the means to manage aquatic nuisances

that are likely to infest the Massachusetts' natural resources in the future.

The new law makes clear that lake and pond users cannot knowingly or willfully launch a vessel that has been in contaminated waters without first decontaminating it in accordance with state environmental regulations. The bill also strengthens enforcement measures by allowing the Department of Conservation and Recreation to impose civil penalties for violations of any rules, regulations, orders, or quarantines issued by the Commissioner. The Massachusetts Environmental Police are authorized to proceed against the owner of a vessel involved in a violation. Further, progressive fines for violating aquatic nuisance rules, regulations, orders or quarantines are established.

Jim McGrath

BOAT RAMP MONITORING PLANS

With the boating season soon to be fully underway, the City of Pittsfield will once again be staffing the public access boat ramps at both Onota Lake and Pontoosuc Lake with ramp monitors.

The purpose of the boat ramp monitors is make certain that all vessels looking to launch (canoes, kayaks, motor boats....really, anything that floats) are not posing a threat of bringing zebra mussels into our waterbodies. The monitors check in with each boater prior to their launching to determine if the boat poses a risk, based on past boating history. If the boat is not contaminated, all that is required of the boater is to sign and display the Clean Boat Certification Form on their tow vehicle dashboard. The monitors also are

versed in zebra mussel biology and are a good source of information on best ways to decontaminate your boat. You will see the monitors at the ramps by mid May and they will be working seven days a week through Labor Day.

Funding for this effort is being supplied by the City of Pittsfield and with a grant of \$12,000 from the MA Department of Conservation and Recreation. For additional information on the city of Pittsfield's zebra mussel spread prevention efforts, please contact me at 413.499.9344.

Jim McGrath

HERBICIDE TREATMENT RESULTS AND PLANS

We now have completed five years of Herbicide Treatment and the overall results are very good. The 2012 treatment by Aquatic Control Technology, (ACT), was extremely good without any excessive growth spots, which easily met the contract guarantee of 85% weed free. The excellent result was due to excellent weather conditions during the application of the

herbicide on May 31, 2012. ACT used the herbicide, Reward, to control the Eurasian Milfoil, (Myriophyllum Spicatum), and Curly Leaf Pondweed, (Potamogeton Crispus). The May treatment of the lake using the herbicide, Reward, will be the standard for the foreseeable future. ACT now has the contract through 2014 since they won the three year contract issued in

the spring of 2011. Again I am sure you have noticed that the clarity of the water is better and there were no weeds on the surface or floating on the surface. As usual a post-treatment inspection was done on July 26th, and a Macrophyte survey was done on September 19th, confirming that the Milfoil and Curly leaf was gone except for a few plants widely dispersed. Several native plants were growing like Coontail, Water Celery, Pondweed, and a new native Richardson's Pondweed was not found this year. The fall survey again showed an increase of European Pondweed, (Najas Minor), in Gunn's cove and in the northwest corner of the lake. This was expected and can be dealt with by making spot treatments with Reward depending on availability of money. The surveys showed that no follow up treatment was required. ACT joined with us for the September survey and concurred with our findings. As required by law volunteers from the Friends of Pontoosuc will post signs, like the sample on the right, around the lake notifying everyone about the day of treatment. Boating, fishing, and swimming will not be allowed on the day of treatment. The lake will be patrolled to instruct people who may not have seen the signs. Since Reward is a contact herbicide it does not kill the roots but curtails the growth, and some treatment will be needed each year. If you should be using lake water to irrigate your lawn or garden, Note: that you should not use the water for ten days allowing the, Reward, to biodegrade.

LAKE TO BE CHEMICALLY TREATED ON
DATE TBD

WARNING

**THESE WATERS WILL/HAVE BEEN
CHEMICALLY TREATED TO
CONTROL THE GROWTH OF
NUISANCE AQUATIC
VEGETATION AND ALGAE**

USAGE OF THESE WATERS FOR:

**DRINKING AND COOKING
ARE PROHIBITED UNTIL 10 DAYS AFTER TBD**

**BOATING, FISHING, SWIMMING
ARE PROHIBITED UNTIL 1 DAY AFTER TBD**

**WATERING OF LIVESTOCK IS
PROHIBITED UNTIL 10 DAYS AFTER TBD**

IRRIGATION IS PROHIBITED UNTIL 10 DAYS AFTER TBD

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Aquatic Control Technology, Inc.
11 John Road
Sutton, MA 01590



THIS CHEMICAL TREATMENT IS BEING CONDUCTED PURSUANT TO A PERMIT
ISSUED BY THE MA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION (MAS DEP)

Gordon E. Zaks FOP/W clerk
*Aquatic Control Technology, Inc. October 31,
2012 report available on our Web Page.*

LANESBOROUGH ADOPTS LIMITED DOCK BY-LAW

At a special Town meeting last July Lanesborough voted to adopt a by-law on docks and moorings. A by-law was proposed which restricted size and location of any dock at a residence or on a right-of-way. At the meeting amendments were adopted to; 1) Restrict the by-law to apply only to rights-of-ways, and 2) Specify that there shall be no dock or mooring on any right-of-way in the Town. Existing docks with a license from the DEP are

grandfathered, and therefore allowed by the by-law. The proponents of the original by-law still believe that a more comprehensive one needed because it is the only way to provide local input and to ensure consistency. As of this writing, there are no plans to try again for the expanded version.

Lee Hauge

REGULATIONS MAY BE ENACTED TO LIMIT DRAWDOWN CAPABILITY

Winter drawdowns are an important part of our weed management strategy and are necessary to limit shoreline damage from wind-driven ice. A study is underway which may limit our capability to perform these important drawdowns.

Rivers and stream below dams can be impaired by operation of the dam if flows depart greatly from the "natural flow regime". This term describes the characteristic patterns of streamflow in quantity, timing and variability throughout the year (high flow during snow melt, low flows in the summer, etc.). The river's

plants fish, animals and other aquatic life have evolved to thrive with this flow. The Division of Ecological Restoration (DER, part of the DFW) is developing guidelines for dam managers intended to protect the downstream habitat. They have selected Pontoosuc and Onota lakes for a pilot study, working with local lake volunteers and officials to evaluate options. The challenge is to find a compromise which allows the lake manager to achieve drawdown and refill, and keep flows downstream within the range believed desirable for that habitat. This effort started in 2008, and our evaluation of the initial DER proposed guidelines revealed very significant problems. If Pontoosuc were required to adhere to the guidelines it would be impossible to achieve drawdown nearly half the time even if we started on October 1, and refill would not be

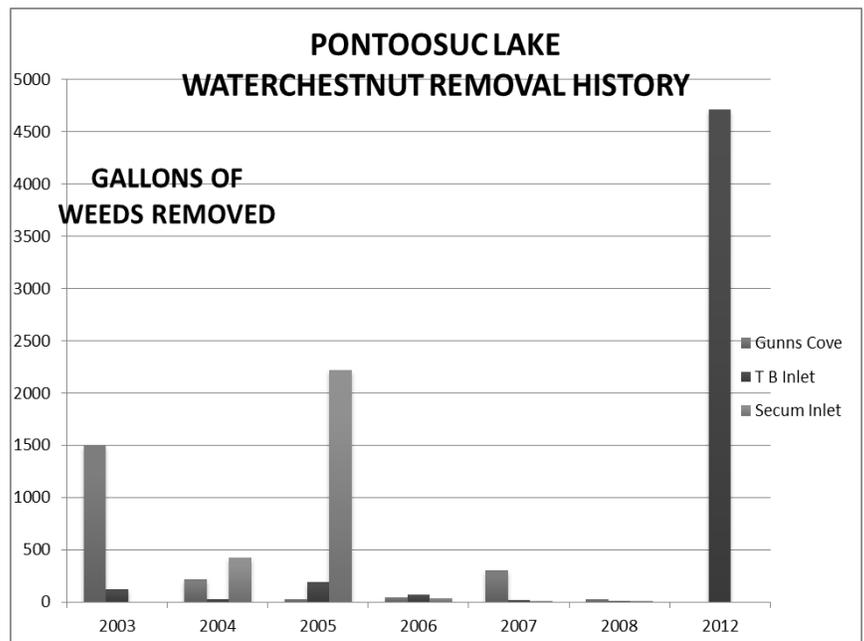
completed by the end of May 20% of the time. This was clearly not acceptable to us. The effort went dormant after 2009 because of personnel changes at DER, but restarted last fall. Our concern is that if DER decides on guidelines which are too restrictive and provides them to local conservation commissions, we will lose the capability to do drawdowns. Drawdown is an extremely effective tool in the lake manager's arsenal for controlling weeds, and is also necessary for flood control and protecting the lake shoreline. We will continue this dialog with the DER people, and work to avoid an outcome which unnecessarily limits our capability to conduct drawdowns

Lee Hauge

WATERCHESTNUT RESURGENCE

They're back big time!! We discovered two huge beds of this invasive last July in the Town Brook inlet area above the Bull Hill Rd causeway. A group of dedicated volunteers responded to our request for help, and thanks to their efforts, we hopefully have avoided disaster, and with follow-up in the future can keep this very aggressive invader at bay. The problem occurred in the Town Brook inlet area upstream of the Bull Hill Road causeway. A small infestation was found there 10 years ago when we first learned they were in Pontoosuc, and modest quantities were pulled over the next 5 years, at which point they were well contained, and removing a cluster here and there was all that was required. Apparently the kayakers who were patrolling the area didn't check the two spot where we found last year's growth, and they multiplied unchecked, probably for a few years.

The effort last year took place on the first two Saturdays in August. There were 17 workers on the 4th and 15 on the 11th, 24 different people, 8 working both days. A larger quantity of material was removed by far than in any of our previous efforts. A special thanks to Warren Keeler who generously lent us his property to work from and to compost the material removed. Also special thanks to Larry Bell who not only worked both Saturdays, but continued the rest of the summer



removing a great many plants which grew to the surface after our August work parties. Also thanks to the many kayakers who patrol the waters searching out the stray waterchestnut plant which might be the start of another major infestation, most notably Don Dermeyer who has done the bulk of the work keeping the Secum Brook inlet above Narragansett Ave causeway clear for the last several years

The chart above summarizes the history of our efforts, and illustrates the need to remain vigilant

Lee Hauge

ICE-OUT DATES HISTORY

74 years ago, on April 8, 1939 the Berkshire Eagle carried an article "Break-up of Ice on Lake May Set All Time Record". The Eagle went on to say, "Many long-term residents are of the opinion that a new record will be established in 1939 in the annual ice-out on Pontoosuc". The article did indicate that ice was not expected to leave the Lake until late April. It went on to say that ice left early in 1938 (March 28) and if it lasts till after April 24" it would set a new record as the latest ice-out day for the last 15 or so years.

Then on May 1, 1940 the Eagle carried an article saying "Pontoosuc Lake Sheds Its Ice". The article went on to say, "now it can be said that spring is here for Pontoosuc Lake has shed its ice 5 days later than the 15 year record set last year. Incidentally the day that ice when out in 1940 the temperature was in the 70s however of the day before the temperature hit 78°.

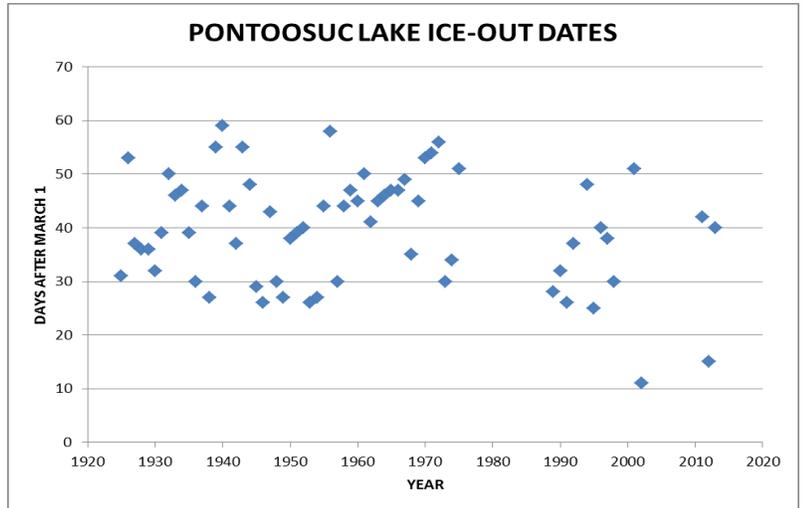
The following records the dates for ice out beginning in 1925 and running on through 1940.

Mar 28 – 1938	Apr 15 - 1937
April 1 – 1936	Apr 17 – 1933
Apr 2 – 1925	Apr 18 - 1934

Apr 3 – 1930	Apr 21 - 1932
Apr 7 – 1928 & 1929	Apr 24 - 1926
Apr 8 – 1927	Apr 26 - 1939
Apr 10 – 1931 & 1935	Apr 30 – 1940

Below is an up-to-date chart of all dates in our database. Note the two very early dates since 2000; another indication of climate change?

Jack Hickey



Presidents Ltr (cont)

DOCK LICENSES

All docks on Pontoosuc are required to be licensed by the Commonwealth because Pontoosuc is a great pond. Enforcement is not rigorous, and about 80% of the existing docks are not licensed. I recommend that everyone with a dock get it licensed. The cost, primarily for advertising the DEP and the Conservation Commission hearings is about \$500. I have developed a step-by-step description of the process and will provide it to anyone on request. The DEP is developing a streamlined process which is under internal review, will cost a little less, but will not be available for use until probably the end of the year.

OTHER PROJECTS

Additional activities which we performed last year and will continue in the future are:

- Water quality sampling and lake weed surveys to monitor the health of the lake, provide an historical database to guide future actions, and to comply with conditions imposed by the conservation commissions.

- Obtain permits from the Pittsfield and Lanesborough conservation commissions for lake management activities including drawdown and herbicide plant control. The deep drawdown permit for 2011 required a great deal of work and it must be renewed this winter.
- Make measurements and generate reports in order to comply with the orders of conditions issued by the conservation commissions pertaining to lake management.
- Implementation of our watershed management plan. Correction of the dirt road runoff is our top priority.
- Annual Lake clean-up in the spring.
- Hand-pull water chestnuts

The Friends of Pontoosuc Lake is a volunteer organization. We welcome your participation. Please support us financially by returning your dues in the enclosed envelope.

Lee Hauge, President



FRIENDS OF PONTOOSUC

Gordon Zaks, Clerk
17 Narragansett Ave
Pittsfield, MA 01201-1021

**SPRING LAKE CLEAN-UP
JUNE 7-9**

**CONTACT
MICHELE RIVERS-MURPHY
443-7881**

YOUR HELP IS NEEDED

**THE FRIENDS OF PONTOOSUC
THANK**

**U-DRIVE BOAT RENTAL
281-4196**

**FOR THEIR GENEROSITY IN PROVIDING
PONTOON BOATS TO SUPPORT OUR WORK**

**2013 ANNUAL MEETING
FRIENDS OF PONTOOSUC
TUESDAY MAY 28 7:00 PM
ITAM LODGE on the lake**

**GET AN UPDATE ON STATUS OF THE LAKE, HERBICIDE
WEED CONTROL RESULTS AND PLANS, DRAWDOWN
PLANS, WATER QUALITY, AND MORE**