

# *McGrath Pond-Salmon Lake Association*

## *Fall-Winter 2024 Newsletter*

### **Editor's Corner**

Welcome to the 2024 Fall/Winter edition of the McGrath Pond–Salmon Lake Association Newsletter. Our Fall/Winter editions are electronic form only.

It's been a beautiful and protracted fall foliage season. Summer saw a reasonable amount of rain that kept the trees and shrubs in good shape, and they have rewarded us with vibrant reds, yellows, and oranges over most of October into November.

Water clarity in the lakes was unusually good over the summer, with final Secchi disc readings in mid-October of 6.55 meters in McGrath and 4.30 in Salmon. That means water clarity went almost to the bottom of the deepest part of McGrath and considerably deeper than normal during mid-October in Salmon. (In case you're metrically challenged, it's 21.5 and 14.1 feet, respectively.)

In the Spring/Summer edition, we ran an article by the MPSLA Water Quality Committee titled, "PFAS Compounds in our Lakes." As you will recall, those are the "forever chemicals" much in the news and linked to a variety of serious health issues, including cancer, thyroid disease, infertility, and high blood pressure. Based on our testing as well as analysis by the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), the source of these chemical compounds is the capped Oakland landfill on the east side of Town Farm Road. That landfill was used by Oakland for about a century

until taken out of service and capped under DEP supervision in 1990.

At the time the Spring/Summer Newsletter went to press in late May, Maine DEP and the Maine Centers for Disease Control (CDC) had not yet released the results of the previous summer's testing for PFAS in the water and in the fish that inhabit both our lakes. Those results came out later in June and are reproduced here on pages 3 & 4. (Maine CDC Fish Consumption Advisory) The long and short of those results are this: Don't ingest the water or eat the fish—at least, not much of either—and please tell other people if they haven't gotten the message. If you want to know CDC's process in deciding whether to issue an advisory for a particular lake, that discussion can be found here: <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/environmental-health/eohp/fish/documents/pfas-fish-scientific-brief-06182024.pdf>

Should you want to see the most recent DEP readings on PFAS compounds in McGrath Pond, Salmon Lake, and in surface water coming off the capped Oakland landfill, you can find them on the agency's online map. <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=468a9f7ddcd54309bc1ae8ba173965c7>

On that page, you can enlarge the map with Augusta in the center to help locate our lakes. Then, go to the blue fish symbol on McGrath or Salmon and click on it. The box that comes up will say, "Fish Sample Location" or "Surface Water Sample." At the top, you can switch between them with the small triangle. In

"Surface Water Sample," click on "Sample Results" lower down. Results are in the next-to-last column in parts per trillion, and there are six pages. Note that there is a symbol (although not a blue fish) on the Oakland landfill (east of Town Farm Road, between Kelleher and Nutting Trails), and it also shows PFAS results, but on just three pages.

MPSLA is in continuing contact with 7 Lakes Alliance, Maine DEP, and the Town of Oakland in regard to the PFAS situation. We are concerned about these chemical compounds leaving the landfill site and coming into contact with people and wildlife. Keep in mind that, as harmful as it is, PFAS is just the canary in the coal mine. Landfill leachate commonly contains many other toxic substances with known adverse health consequences, for example, benzene, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), and heavy metals such as barium, mercury, and cobalt. It's important to contain all of them on site, and we will report back as we work toward that goal.

On a lighter note, this issue of the Newsletter contains some beautiful aerial photos taken during recent Fall foliage by MPSLA member Rob True with his DJI Air 3 Drone. Rob captured stunning photos of

both lakes and the Narrows between them. Eye candy like this is good for the soul. Thank You, Rob!

Other features in this Fall/Winter edition: an explanation of shoreland zoning—where it came from and what it's all about—by a real expert, 7 Lakes Alliance's Lynn Geiger, and a transcript of one of the programs Maine Public Radio ran last summer about the effects of a warming world on Maine's lakes. This one concerns how warmer water and longer growing seasons make our lakes more vulnerable to invasive plants such as the variable-leaf milfoil that infests lakes on three sides of us. We also have a "Laker's Dozen" ways to protect McGrath Pond and Salmon Lake, brought to you by the good folks at LakeSmart.

I hope you find all of these articles interesting and informative. As always, if there is anything more that you would like to see MPSLA do—or, even better, if you would like to become involved—do not hesitate to reach out to us at [outreach@mcgrathpond-salmonlake.org](mailto:outreach@mcgrathpond-salmonlake.org).

All the Best,

*Lenny Reich*

Editor

lsreich@colby.edu



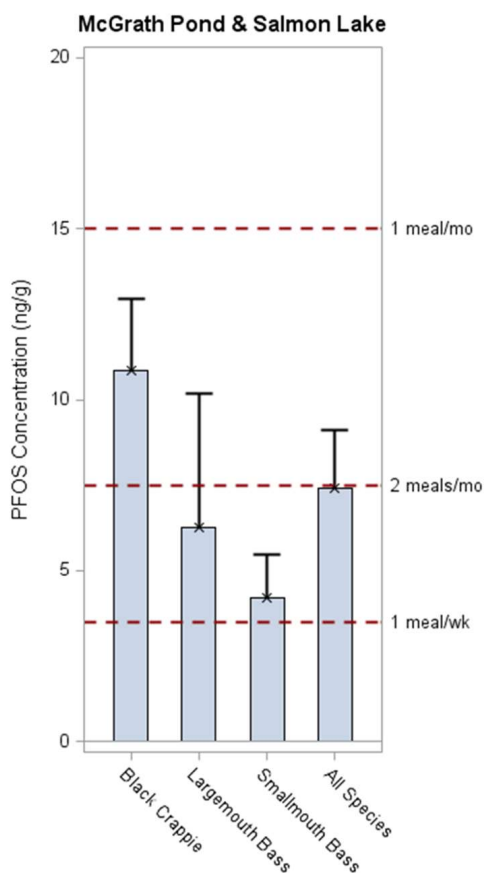
# Maine CDC Fish-Consumption Advisory

## III. Basis for Waterbody-Specific Fish Consumption Advisories

### A. McGrath Pond and Salmon Lake (Ellis Pond) – Belgrade and Oakland

Area: All of McGrath Pond and Salmon Lake (Ellis Pond).

Advisory: For the general population, consume no more than one meal per month of any fish species.



**Figure 1. Fish tissue PFOS concentrations in McGrath Pond and Salmon Lake in Belgrade and Oakland.** The bars correspond to the mean PFOS tissue concentration in each species, or all species combined, for both McGrath Pond and Salmon Lake. The cap of the error bar corresponds to the upper confidence limit on the mean.

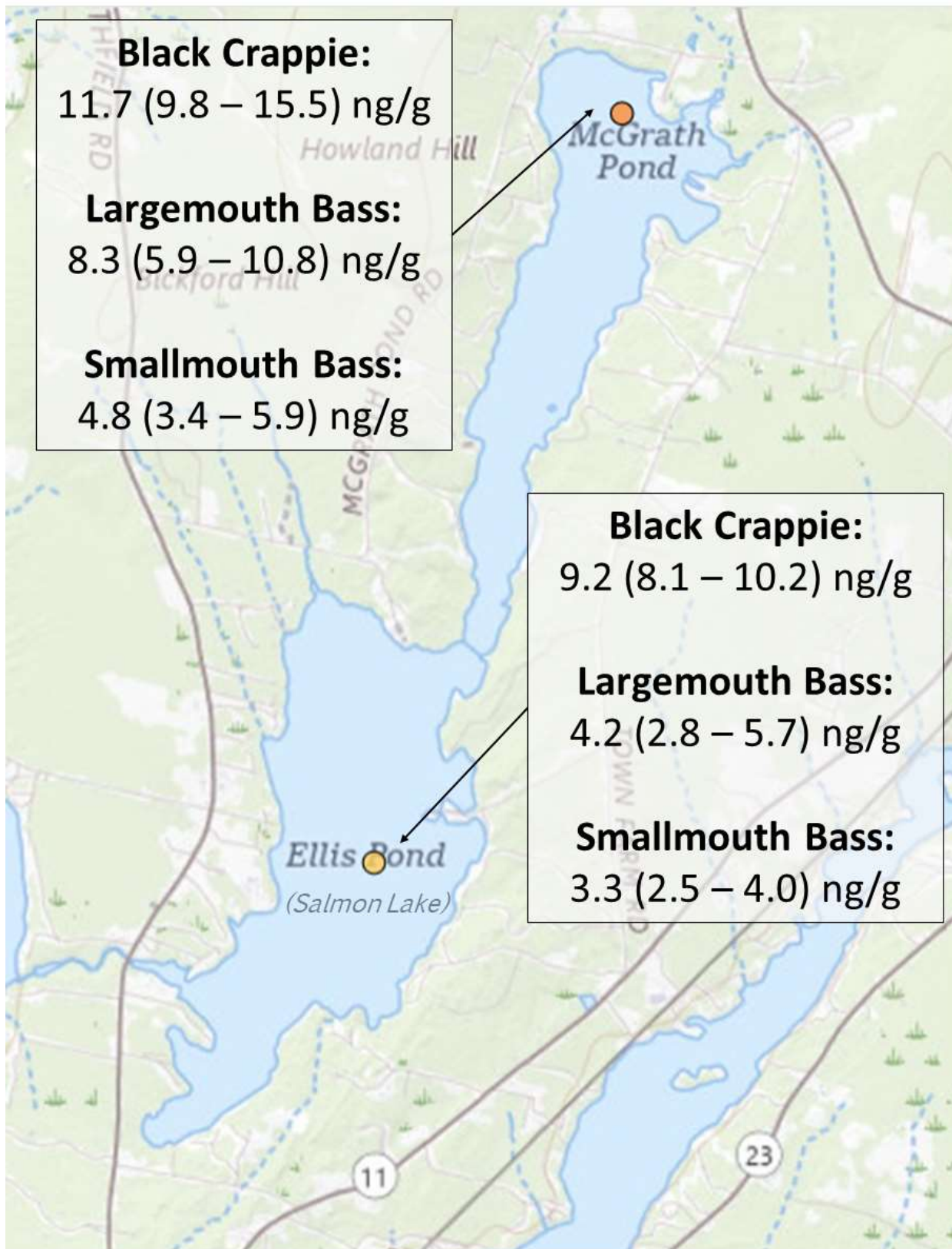
The smallmouth bass samples had a mean PFOS concentration of 4.2 ng/g with an upper confidence limit on the mean of 5.5 ng/g. The largemouth bass samples had a mean PFOS concentration of 6.3 ng/g with an upper confidence limit on the mean of 10.2 ng/g. The mean PFOS concentration for all species in McGrath Pond and Salmon Lake was 7.4 ng/g with an upper confidence limit on the mean of 9.1 ng/g (Figure 1). The 9.1 ng/g upper confidence limit PFOS concentration corresponds to a consumption rate of less than 2 meals per month, and the 13.0 ng/g upper confidence limit for black crappie is close to the limit of one meal per month. For simplicity, an advisory to consume not more than one meal per month of any fish species is recommended for these waters.

Justification: Between 2022 and 2023 a total of four five-fish composite black crappie, three five-fish composite smallmouth bass, and two five-fish composite largemouth bass samples were collected from McGrath Pond in Oakland (Map 1). The black crappie samples had PFOS concentrations ranging from 9.8 to 15.5 ng/g. The smallmouth bass samples had PFOS concentrations ranging from 3.4 to 5.9 ng/g. The largemouth bass samples had PFOS concentrations ranging from 5.9 to 10.8 ng/g.

In 2023, a total of two five-fish composite black crappie, two five-fish composite smallmouth bass, and two five-fish composite largemouth bass samples were also collected from Salmon Lake (Map 1). The black crappie samples had PFOS concentrations of 8.1 and 10.2 ng/g. The smallmouth bass samples had PFOS concentrations of 2.5 and 4.0 ng/g. The largemouth bass samples had PFOS concentrations of 2.8 and 5.7 ng/g. Given that McGrath Pond and Salmon Lake are connected waterbodies, the overlapping concentration ranges between McGrath Pond and Salmon Lake, and the overlapping concentration ranges between species, the data for all species in both lakes were combined for statistical analysis.

When combined, the black crappie samples from McGrath Pond and Salmon Lake had a mean PFOS concentration of 10.8 ng/g with an upper confidence limit on the mean of 13.0 ng/g.

**Map 1.** Approximate locations of fish sampling for PFOS from McGrath Pond and Salmon Lake in Belgrade and Oakland with mean and range of PFOS concentrations in each species sampled.



## Drone Photographs of McGrath Pond-Salmon Lake

MPSLA member Rob True is an FAA Part 107 Certified Remote Pilot. He took these photos with his DJI Air 3 Drone in the Fall of 2024.



*Cold Stream delta, northwest corner of Salmon Lake*



*Looking over Birch Point, through the Narrows, and up into McGrath Pond*



© Rob True

*Early morning fog, from the south end of the Narrows looking west along the north shore of Salmon Lake*



© Rob True

*From the south end of Salmon Lake, looking up toward the Narrows*





*Early morning fog, looking east along Salmon Lake north shore toward the Narrows*

## What is Shoreland Zoning?

By Lynn Geiger, Erosion Control Policy Manager  
7 Lakes Alliance

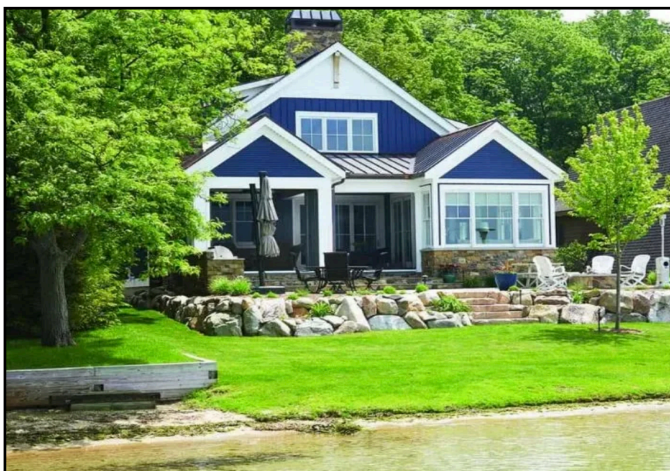
If you own property on McGrath Pond or Salmon Lake, you've probably run across the term Shoreland Zoning. Maybe you were thinking about sprucing up your property and had to redraft your plans after talking with the Oakland or Belgrade Code Enforcement Officer. Or maybe your neighbors have done something you consider questionable on their property, and you want to know if it's allowed.

So, what is Shoreland Zoning, and why are there regulations in the first place? The answer is that the Maine Legislature passed the Mandatory Shoreland Zoning Act in 1971 "to protect water quality, wildlife habitat, wetlands, archaeological sites and historic resources, and commercial fishing and maritime industries." That was a time of raised environmental consciousness—President Nixon established the federal EPA in December 1970—and Mainers wanted to preserve their wonderful natural heritage.

In the legislation, each town was responsible for its own shoreland zone (SLZ). The state had oversight based on the act, but the towns themselves would be the regulatory authorities. Towns had the option to adopt the State guidelines or write their own, so long as theirs were at least as strict as the State's.

The Mandatory Shoreland Zoning Act defined the SLZ as the area within 250 feet of the normal high-water line of lakes and wetlands, and within 75 feet of streams. "Normal high-water" is the highest the water gets during a normal year, not in a flood.

The guidelines written by the State have been updated as the understanding of natural resource protection has grown. Since there are seven towns with shore on the Belgrade Lakes, the information here is based on the State SLZ guidelines, rather than specific towns. In some cases, Belgrade and Oakland may have stricter rules.



*Property with lawn to the (green) lake*

The Mandatory Shoreland Zoning Act and its later enhancements were enacted to prevent more damage from being done to water bodies. If a change to the landscape already occurred, they had no authority. So, if you already have a lawn all the way down to the lake, it can stay there. However, if you don't maintain your lawn and it reverts back to shrubs and trees, it's then subject to SLZ regulations — a kind of "use it or lose it" approach to regulation.

It may seem like there are a lot of dos and don'ts around the lake, but, for the most part, shoreland zoning is pretty simple. In general, no new structures are permitted within 100 feet of a lake or wetland, and the land must remain natural. That usually requires you maintain buffers and provide for rainwater infiltration, preventing runoff from reaching a lake or stream.

Buffers are swaths of vegetation protecting water bodies from areas of human activity such as lawns and buildings. We want to keep buffers intact for several reasons. They provide wildlife habitat, protect shorelines from erosion, and filter pollutants from runoff. You are allowed to make a six-foot-wide path through a buffer to access the water and even build steps to the lake if your property is too steep for any alternative (with a permit from your Code Enforcement Officer). You can trim the bottom third of limbs from trees to maintain your view of the water, but you need to leave brush less than three feet tall in place to keep the soil stable. A healthy buffer needs a canopy to intercept raindrops and dissipate their energy, so openings in the canopy are limited to 250 square feet.

Infiltration of rainwater coming onto your site is extremely important, so the State set a maximum of 20% impervious surfaces in the SLZ. Impervious surfaces include buildings, driveways, and patios. Limiting impervious surface lets the ground absorb more rainfall instead of concentrating it into runoff, which causes erosion and delivers pollutants into the lake.



*Buffer between lawn and lake*

The regulations were written to protect buildings and infrastructure as well. For example, the shoreland zoning regulations require the lowest level of a building to be at least one foot above the elevation of a 100-year flood, so houses don't get flooded by big rain storms. Certain areas can't be built on at all, like flood plains, wetlands, and steep slopes. In these areas, also called "Resource Protection Districts," the setback is increased to 250 feet.

And septic systems need to be on suitable soils, set back properly, and fully functional to prevent nutrients from finding their way into water bodies and causing algal blooms.

In the end, Shoreland Zoning is really common sense. It's all about preserving the lakes, streams, and wetlands for future generations. You can read more about it on the Maine Department of Environmental Protection Website: <https://www.maine.gov/dep/land/slz>

If you have questions about SLZ regulation in Belgrade or Oakland or are concerned about a potential SLZ violation, contact your town's Code Enforcement Officer. In Belgrade, that's Hans Rasmussen [ceo@townofbelgrade.com](mailto:ceo@townofbelgrade.com), and in Oakland, it's Nathan Smart [nsmart@oaklandmaine.us](mailto:nsmart@oaklandmaine.us)

# Maine's Warming Lakes Encourage Invasive Plants

by [Peter McGuire, Maine Public](#) August 28, 2024

Michael Flannery piloted an open top barge into the Bayou, a narrow dead-end channel where the Songo River empties into Sebago Lake. As manager of the invasives program for the Lakes Environmental Association (LEA), he helped clear variable leaf milfoil from the waterway last summer. "When we left this last year, it looked pretty good, and now this year it's full of milfoil," Flannery said.

Beneath and between boats crammed against the shore, milfoil spreads in thick mats, making boating difficult and swimming impossible. It's the most common aquatic invasive plant in Maine, although there are several others also spreading quickly. Even a small fragment stuck on a boat hull



*Variable-leaf milfoil choking a Maine lake*

or propeller can establish milfoil in another water body. In the Belgrade Lakes and nearby Cobbossee watershed, curly-leaf pondweed, Eurasian watermilfoil, and European frogbit have already become established.

Left unaddressed, these invasives will take over shorefronts and crowd out native species of plants, fish and wildlife. They are also becoming harder to manage. Climate change has warmed Maine lakes 5.5° Fahrenheit on average since the 1980s, far faster than the annual air temperature increase.

With warmer water and milder winters, lake ice doesn't last as long. That means a longer growing season for invasive plants.

"If the ice is gone in early March, the lake is going to warm up faster, and this stuff will grow," LEA Executive Director Colin Holme said. "We have milfoil growing earlier, and it grows later into the season. There were reports of milfoil growing vibrantly into November last year," he added. To illustrate his point, Holme pointed to a patch of milfoil in the Bayou that's already flowering above the water. That's an indication of a robust plant with good prospects to reproduce. "Most years it didn't flower, and when it did flower it was a big thing, we'd go down, we'd photo-document it. And now it is flowering most years, and this year it started flowering in June, which was unheard of. Usually it flowers in late July and August," Holme said.

Once invasive plants are established, they're nearly impossible to fully eradicate and expensive to contain.

About 40 lakes in Maine have recorded invasive plants. That makes it an outlier compared to other states. "We still have a lot to protect in Maine," said John McPhedran, a lake scientist for Maine DEP. "Other states have a much higher percentage of their waterbodies with an aquatic invasive 12

species.” McGrath Pond and Salmon Lake are two of Maine’s lakes remaining invasive-free, so far.

Advocates worry the bulwark against the spread of unwanted species is starting to buckle.

Courtesy Boat Inspectors (CBIs) are the first line of defense against invasive spread by checking boats going into or coming out of waterbodies to see they’re not carrying plants and by educating the public about the problem. But just like the growing season, the



*A Courtesy Boat Inspector hard at work*

boating season is lasting longer, and boat launches usually go unattended before Memorial Day and after Labor Day weekend.

“The boat launches are very, very busy in the fall. That’s when there are a lot of bass tournaments, and just a lot of a lot of people enjoying leaf peeping season and all those things,” said Sharon Mann, director of the invasives program at 7 Lakes Alliance for the Belgrade Lakes. Public funding for courtesy inspectors is miniscule to begin with, Mann said. And after high school and college students hired to monitor the launches leave around Labor Day, the group struggles to find replacements. “We have ads for CBIs posted year round, but there’s hardly anyone to hire outside of Memorial Day to Labor Day,” Mann said. “And it really scares me how many boats are going uninspected in and out of these lakes.”

Back on the Songo, Holme showed off a long section of river that has been mostly cleared of milfoil after years of effort. The Songo is the busiest inland waterway in the state, increasing its infestation risk, he said. LEA used divers to hand-harvest milfoil and underwater barriers to keep it from growing back. Even though the river is in better shape than it was, it takes annual suppression efforts to keep invasives at bay. In early July, two dive teams from LEA were still searching the Songo for milfoil and pulling it where they could find it.

“It’s a success story in my mind, and we’re lucky we started when we did,” Holme said. “I think if we started now, the water’s so warm we couldn’t get a handle on it.” Success doesn’t come cheap. His group budgets about \$200,000 a year for invasive work. A State grant pays for a quarter, and fundraising has to cover the rest. “It’s expensive work, there’s a lot of liability, and there’s a lot of training. It’s not fast, easy, or cheap,” Holme said.

Lawmakers recently increased the price of the milfoil stickers that owners get when they register their boats. That’s expected to raise funding for the invasive program to \$3 million next year, a 60% boost. The money should help, Holme said. But he also hopes boaters start paying attention and doing more to prevent further infestations before it’s too late. As lake waters warm from climate change, preventing infestations will only become more important as the years go by.

# THE LAKESMART LAKER'S DOZEN

Lakes are fragile. Care for them today. Enjoy them tomorrow.

## 1. Support Lake Associations.

Join the board. Attend an annual meeting. Get involved. Visit [lakes.me/map](http://lakes.me/map) to see a map of Maine Lakes association members.

## 2. Stop The Spread of Invasives.

Clean plant fragments off your boat, trailer and equipment before moving your boat.

Drain bilges away from the lake when you leave a waterbody.

Dry your boat or let it sit several days between uses on different water bodies.

Never transfer water or fish from lake to lake.

## 3. Follow Shoreland Zoning Rules.

What happens on land doesn't stay on land. Actions you take on your property can have devastating consequences for the health of your lake. Before any project, check with your town office or Code Enforcement Officer to see if you need a permit for work within the shoreland zone, the 250 feet deep strip of land along the edge of a lake.

## 4. End Erosion.

Check around your buildings, paths, driveways and roads on a rainy day to find places where soil is eroding or washing away. Erosion brings phosphorus into the lake, feeding algae and causing lakes to turn green and "bloom." Fix erosion by planting vegetation downslope; placing crushed stone or erosion control mulch; or constructing swales or rain gardens. For more information on these and other stormwater Best Management Practices, visit [lakes.me/BMPs](http://lakes.me/BMPs).

## 5. Build Better Buffers.

Trees, shrubs and grasses protect water quality by slowing rainwater and filtering out soil and other pollutants before they wash into the lake. Deeper buffers are better, as are those with more layers of vegetation. Native plants do more for pollinators, birds and other wildlife. Visit [lakes.me/protect](http://lakes.me/protect) for resources on buffer plantings.

## 6. Ditch Fertilizers, Herbicides and Pesticides.

Long-lasting chemicals in these products can harm children, pets, and aquatic life. They can also feed algae in your lake and turn it green and smelly.

## 7. Take a Break. Stash Your Rake. Save the Lake!

Limit lawn size, mow less often, leave clippings, and you won't need fertilizer. Don't rake within 75' of shore. Not only is it the law, it is a practice that helps promote native pollinators, and shelters and feeds wildlife.

## 8. Don't Stress Your Septic.

Check your system and pump the tank regularly as advised by your service provider. Use phosphorus-free cleaners and detergents. Stagger laundry loads and dishwasher runs with no more than one a day. Avoid using the disposal, and minimize water use when possible. Don't put toxics or grease down the drain. Visit [lakes.me/septic](http://lakes.me/septic) FMI.

## 9. Build Lake-Friendly Docks.

Cedar, cypress, plastic or aluminum are good dock materials; as is new, pressure-treated lumber.

## 10. Don't Treat Your Lake Like a Washtub.

Dogs, humans or boats should *never* be washed in the lake! Soap is not good for water quality. It feeds algae and isn't good for fish or other wildlife.

## 11. Observe Headway Speed Close to Shore.

Maine law prohibits wakes from boats within 200' of shore. Wakes in shallow water disturb aquatic habitat, stir up sediment, destabilizes shoreline, and damage or destroy loon nests.

## 12. Give Wildlife a Chance.

Lake shallows and land near the water provide food and shelter for more than 60 native wildlife species and serve as nurseries for their young. Don't "Tidy them up!"

## 13. Learn About LakeSmart.

LakeSmart provides site-specific suggestions to homeowners that protect water quality and property values, and prevent lake degradation. To learn more, visit [lakesmart.org](http://lakesmart.org), or contact Maine Lakes at [lakesmart@lakes.me](mailto:lakesmart@lakes.me).



Since 1970, Maine Lakes has worked across the state to protect and preserve the values and benefits of Maine's lakes, ponds and watersheds for future generations. With our more than 100 partner lake associations and our flagship LakeSmart program, we form a nucleus of lake conservation activity that strengthens the capacity of lake ecosystems to resist destabilizing threats and helps build the effectiveness of local lake organizations and allies. FMI and to join us today, please visit [www.lakes.me](http://www.lakes.me).

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*Please show our appreciation by giving these folks our patronage.*

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New England Golf & Tennis Camp [www.golfcamp.com](http://www.golfcamp.com)

Paddle Inn on McGrath Pond [RonNona@Roadrunner.com](mailto:RonNona@Roadrunner.com)

Sheridan Construction [www.sheridancorp.com](http://www.sheridancorp.com)

Whisperwood Lodge & Cottages [www.whisperwoodlodge.com](http://www.whisperwoodlodge.com)

Woodrest Cottages [www.woodrest.com](http://www.woodrest.com)

MPSLA received donations of \$3,750 from the Town of Belgrade  
and \$3,300 from the Town of Oakland during 2024.

A Big *Thank You!* to those Towns and their Taxpayers.

## MPSLA 2024 MEMBERS

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# *McGrath Pond - Salmon Lake Association*

**= Membership is by Calendar Year =**

*During Nov/Dec, payment received from 2024 members will be put toward your 2025 membership. That's a great way to be sure you'll be listed in our printed Spring/Summer 2025 issue!*

## Your Membership and Contributions Fund:

Invasive Plant Patrols  
Courtesy Boat Inspections  
The Youth Conservation Corps  
Water Quality Work of All Kinds  
Education and Outreach Programs  
Matching Funds for Federal Grants  
LakeSmart Evaluations and Programs  
Maintenance of the Narrows Preserve

## MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

Individual — \$35  
Family — \$50  
Lake Steward — \$100  
Watershed Steward — \$250  
Lake Futurist — \$500  
Watershed Futurist — \$1,000+

To join or renew online, please go to

<https://www.mcgrathpond-salmonlake.org/join-mpsla/>

To pay by check, please see the next page 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.

<p><b>Membership starts at \$35 for individuals and \$50 for families.</b></p> <p><b>Business sponsorship starts at \$100.</b> Business Sponsors are featured on our website, in our newsletter, and at the annual meeting.</p>	<p>Please indicate your contribution level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> \$35 Individual</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Family</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Lake Steward</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> \$250 Watershed Steward</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Lake Futurist</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> \$1000+ Watershed Futurist</li></ul>
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**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.**