



Lake Waramaug Task Force, Inc.

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The Lake Waramaug Task Force is a non-profit organization dedicated to restoring and maintaining lake ecology and water quality of Lake Waramaug and its watershed.

Dear Friends of Lake Waramaug:

Fall 2014

We really didn't see this coming quite so soon!

In our last newsletter we explained certain blue green algae, present in Waramaug and most fresh water lakes, are now classified as bacteria and called cyanobacteria. When these "algae-bacteria" die off they release toxins. In very high concentrations this can pose a health threat if lake water is ingested.

Well this summer this happened big time for the city of Toledo, Ohio.

Toledo draws its water supply from Lake Erie. This August an algae bloom produced a large volume of cyanobacteria in the area of the Lake from which their water is drawn. As a result, the entire city of Toledo's water supply was shut off for 3 days.

Then, not too long after Toledo's travails, one of Connecticut's largest lakes, Lake Pocotopaug in East Hampton, was closed to all swimming the entire Labor Day weekend as a result of excessive cyanobacteria. "...it's a problem that happens every summer (in the lake) and algae blooms at this time of the year but it only continues to get worse," East Hampton Town Manager Michael Maniscalco told the Middletown Press.

This last statement: it "only continues to get worse" is the most troubling and unfortunately characterizes the algae problems in many Connecticut lakes - but thankfully not Waramaug.

Seeing the swimming closure of an entire lake and one as big as Pocotopaug makes us more grateful than ever the Task Force began its full-out battle against blue-green algae in 1975 - long before other lakes in Connecticut.

Just this summer the Connecticut State Department of Health issued a directive recommending monitoring all public beaches and shutting them to swimming where high densities of green tinged algae are observed. That's the "gunk" we've been fighting for years. Excessive algae blooms are fueled by phosphorous that is carried into the lake by storm water runoff, lawn fertilizer and farm waste. And reducing phosphorous in the lake has been at the core of our strategy.

As a result and because of your continuing financial and moral support we continue to experience fewer and less dense algae blooms and lower risk of cyanobacteria health risk. But we cannot let our guard down. Clearly this threat multiplies the importance of all our efforts to reduce phosphorous entering the lake system and the algae it sustains.

Please continue to support our efforts and give generously.

Sincerely,

Thomas A.J. McGowan
Executive Director

Linda M. Frank
Chairman

Lake Smart Keeps Shoreline Healthy

The shoreline is the epidermis of the lake – its final protective layer. When shorelines are managed properly, they work to reduce algae and weed growth naturally by containing and treating run-off of water laden with phosphorous.

Lake Smart is one of the LWTF's primary programs for preserving the health of Lake Waramaug by managing its shoreline.



A Lake Smart rain garden: pretty and practical

Lake Smart shoreline area development plans advocate:

- Minimizing impervious surfaces
- Retaining natural shoreline buffers of native vegetation
- Planting new native shrubs with robust root systems that can slow down and absorb storm-water,
- Reducing the size of lawn areas that shed too much rain water into the lake,
- Installing lawn grass swales to direct storm-water to wooded areas
- Installing rain gardens that absorb and naturally cleanse nutrients from heavy storms.

We have worked with the lake-use boards in the towns of Warren and Washington to update both towns' regulations protecting the lake shoreline. These regulations are now recognized as among the most advanced lake protection regulations in the State and are being studied and adopted by other lake communities.

If you are considering major improvements on your land please give us a call (860-868-0331). We can provide information you will find useful in helping to protect the lake.

Add to this our leadership in securing a new State law that has eliminated the use of phosphorous in fertilizers for established lawns — where it is not even needed — and you have a very effective phosphorous busting program that is helping to keep Waramaug clear and healthy.

The Proof Is in the Pudding.

Or, in our line of work, it's in the fish.

Les Ernhout, one of Lake Waramaug's most devoted fisherman, confirms that the condition of Lake Waramaug has gotten much better over his many years as a resident. Les was born, raised and has probably lived here longer than any other member of the community. He remembers the great algae blooms that plagued the Lake when he was "a very young fellow." Thanks to the Lake Waramaug Task Force, he has seen the ecology of the lake gradually improve. The addition of filtration systems, constant monitoring of water conditions, and weed removal have made for a healthier lake. And, according to Les, "the fishing is very good!"



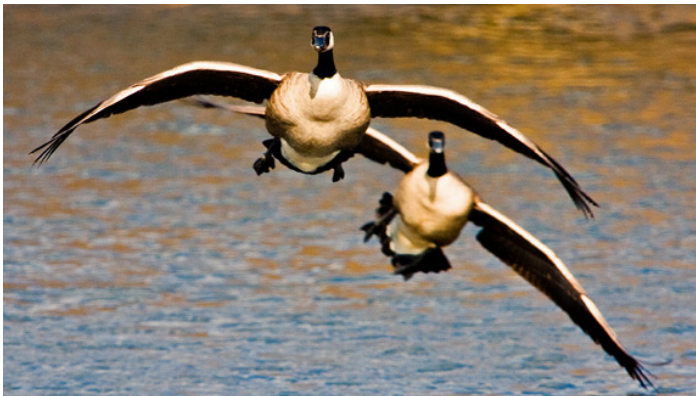
What's biting? Les reports the lake contains many varieties of fish including large and small mouth bass, pickerel, yellow perch, blue gills, pumpkinseeds, bullheads and trout. This September he caught a 4 lb. largemouth bass measuring 19 inches long. After some angling, he revealed his choice of lures for Lake Waramaug. They are "spitten' image," "spinner baits" and "crank baits". When trolling for trout he uses "spinner shines" or "phoebes." A couple of years ago, he caught an 8 lb. bass...which he suspects he may one day catch again...because Les releases all the fish he catches.



Bullhead



Pumpkinseed



Geese: UGH!

The beach at the Lake Waramaug State Park closed briefly to swimming this summer. The presence of *E. coli* in the water around the beach was the reason, and geese get the blame.

Many lake residents noted with distinct displeasure that there were more geese at Waramaug this year than we have seen in a long time. These large populations leave a lot of droppings. Goose “poop” is not only unsightly, it is LOADED with *E. coli*. While all warm bodied organisms harbor *E. coli* in their intestines, geese are particularly proficient at leaving it behind. A single Canada goose eats 3-4 pounds of grass per day and creates as much as 2 – 3 pounds of waste per day!

The State Public Health Code mandates all State and local health departments test all public beaches for presence of *E. coli*. While geese are the overwhelming problem, dog feces also contribute to *E. coli* beach outbreaks.

What can you do? For dogs the obvious solution is to bag and dispose of dog poop wherever it is a threat to wash off into the lake. For geese there is nothing more effective than a good retrieving dog who loves chasing these birds off the land and swimming after them in the water. But, if a dog is not on your bucket list, then a hedge row or shrubs along your shoreline is a start. Geese LOVE lush green turf grass planted right up to the edge of our lakes, ponds, and streams. And...

Please don't feed the Geese!

Goose Poop Primer

- reduce water runoff from steep driveways by installing “thank you mam” bumps
- direct driveway and roof runoff to a rain garden or underground retention tank
- wash cars on grassy areas
- insure that garden sprinklers are directed away from driveways and any paved surface

We're Taking the Alewife Battle to a New Level

Trout eat alewives. And reducing alewives reduces algae growth. So the Task Force is doubling the number of 10-12” brown trout it is putting into the lake this fall, and doubling our stocking budget to \$10,000. We aim to take advantage of the alewife 4-5 year life cycle.

We believe this will let us get more bang for our buck!

Our long term goal is to reduce algae and improve water clarity by restoring the balance of nature. Suppressing the non-indigenous alewife population is central to achieving this goal. This is because alewife's primary food sources are the lake's zooplankton, and it is those very same zooplanktons (microscopic animals) that eat algae.

The Task Force has been stocking Waramaug with brown trout for the past 28 years. The lake's limnologist, Dr. Kortmann, has been tracking the relationship between the numbers of alewife versus zooplankton and water clarity. Kortmann has found there is one age class of alewife that has many more fish than the others. This dominant age class dies off every 4 -5 years. This is followed by a summer season with an upward spike in the number of zooplankton. And these are our best years of water clarity! As of this Fall we are mid way through the life cycle of this biggest age class. So we plan to keep loading the lake with Brown Trout right through the end of this cycle and see what results it brings.

The alewives are a holdover from a program that the Connecticut State Fishery Department spearheaded in the 1950's and 1960's. The state's goal was to improve sport fishing by stocking the lake with alewives. Unfortunately, the plan backfired. Rather than make the lake a watersports mecca, the introduction of alewife drastically altered nature's way of keeping excessive algae growth in check, and accelerated the lake's decline.

The State eventually recognized its mistake. It stopped stocking the lake, and banned fishermen from using alewife as bait. Still, a sizeable alewife population remains in Waramaug. We cannot simply “kill off” all the alewives without doing harm to other fish and to the ecology of the lake in general. Instead, we are committed to eliminating them the natural way...working through hungry, healthy and hardy trout, in sync with mother nature.



Alewife: An ocean going school fish that spawns in fresh water. Alewife can live in a fresh water lake such as Waramaug for 4 to 5 years growing to a size of 3"-5".

We would like to...

keep you informed about critical issues that impact the Lake and life on the Lake. To do so as quickly and as efficiently as possible, we need your email. If you'd like to be on our email alert list, please provide your email address on the response form enclosed or email it to lwtfct1985@aol.com.

Board Comings and Goings

We welcome two new members to the Lake Waramaug Task Force Board: Kristen Browne and David Lindley.

Kristen Browne grew up in central Connecticut and often visited Lake Waramaug as a child. She and husband Jamie moved here from Houston with their two school age children to be closer to family and friends. They bought a house on Arrow Point four years ago and now live on the Lake full-time.

David Lindley and his wife Jane have been weekend residents of Warren since 1984. They made the trek from New York City winter, spring, summer and fall. Now David has retired from his law practice, and he has time to share his expertise and passion for the Lake with the LWTF.

The board bids adieu to Karen Silk, who has retired from the LWTF Board after serving for many years. Karen, a real estate agent with Sotheby's International in Washington Depot, was a leader in organizing the very successful Lake Waramaug House tour sponsored by Sotheby's in the Fall of 2011. We thank her for her dedication to the Lake she so loves.

We were all saddened by the loss of our fellow board-member Mechy Bonachea this Spring. Mechy's energy and love of the lake were contagious. She swam, rowed, water-skied, paddled and organized a long-standing annual swim across the lake. Mechy embodied the spirit of Lake Waramaug and she is greatly missed.

