



Let's Meet at Lake Mansfield

The Newsletter of Lake Mansfield Alliance (LMA)

Spring 2009

Dear Lake Mansfield Supporters,

LMA is coming into its 5th year. While our membership has grown, our mission remains the same: to preserve, protect and enhance Lake Mansfield as a vital natural habitat and community resource. We have helped to strengthen the sense of community in the entire Lake Mansfield Recreation Area. We have planted elm and maple trees. We have made the Beach Area safer and better equipped. And last season we made great strides in building a trail system that connects our lake space to our neighborhoods and downtown area. Soon the beach park will be enhanced by an accessible trail system, inviting folks to explore the cool, diverse, and magical Lake Mansfield Conservation Forest. Our work is accomplished only through cooperative efforts supported by our town officials, commissions, and services. We are grateful for their encouragement and support.

Our success would not have been possible without our amazing volunteers: community members, students, and experts from the Appalachian Mountain Club, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy and the Great Barrington Garden Club. We have laughed and toiled together, building great friendships and a strong future for Lake Mansfield.

We hope you will join us this year as we work to care for Lake Mansfield. Your service and donations are crucial to LMA's continued success. There is still much to be done, but if we lead with our hearts and approach our work with joy, we can accomplish amazing things.



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2009 Lake Mansfield Events

Sunday, May 3, 11:00 – 3:00

**Lake Mansfield Celebration
& Clean Up Day**

**potluck lunch, community meeting,
afternoon kayaking & guided trail
walk (Conservation Forest Trails)**

A great day of hard work & joyfulness!

Rain date: Saturday May 9th

Trail Building at the Lake

Lake Mansfield Conservation Forest

Our work continues as we develop
our accessible woodland system.

Specific work dates to be announced.

See p.2 for more details

Summer Evening Paddles

Last Thursdays, June thru September

Meet at the Boat Launch 6PM

September Senior Picnic & Planting

Co-sponsored by the

Great Barrington Garden Club

Date to be announced

Saturday, October 3, 10AM

Lake Mansfield Heritage Walk

Explore the "Central Loop Trail," which
connects Lake Mansfield to our down-
town and neighborhood areas.

Meet at the beach area.

Features: Forest, River Walk, downtown,
farmer's market and lakeside. 2.5 hours.

To register: ch.wards@verizon.net

Lake Mansfield Conservation Forest Trails Project

Dale Abrams & Christine Ward

Just a few steps from the beach at Lake Mansfield a new trail has begun to take shape. Located within the town-owned Lake Mansfield Conservation Forest, this trail connects the lake to the nearby Christian Hill Rd. and Welcome St. neighborhoods and the Christian Hill Commons housing development. Funded by grants from the Department of Conservation and Recreation and the Berkshire Environmental Endowment, these accessible trails will provide a much-needed resource for people with physical challenges as well as a great place for many—our aging population, students, residents and visitors—to connect with the natural world. The conservation forest trail project is an excellent example of the important work that LMA continues



Peter Jensen supervises volunteers



Jacob strips bark



Bridge decking is mounted on stringers

to do on behalf of open space, recreation, and community health. Improving the trails in the conservation forest has been long called for in the town's open space and recreation plans. With the support of the Great Barrington Conservation Commission, LMA has initiated a major trail redesign, established a new trail route, and worked on the construction of a new pedestrian bridge—all accomplished through dozens of well-attended volunteer work days last spring, summer, and early fall. These work days offered volunteers an opportunity to work alongside master trail designer and builder, Peter Jensen. The final phase of this project will complete



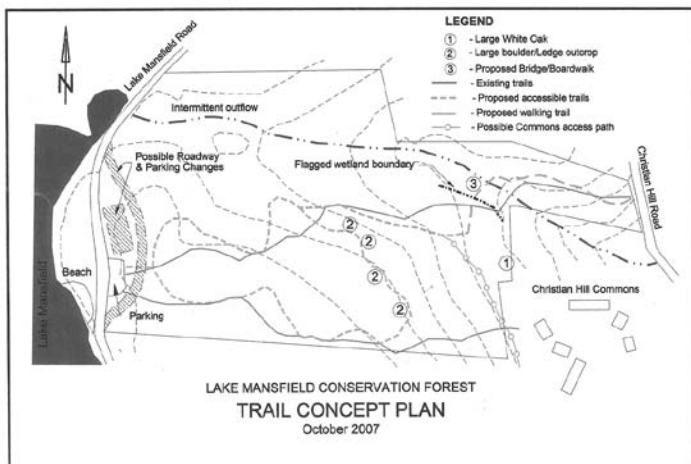
BCC students move lumber

the surfacing of the main trail (between the lake and Christian Hill Rd.), add a new spur trail, providing access to Christian Hill Commons, and create a new accessible trail that loops back to the lake.

This project provides a critical link in the development of a town-wide trail system recently mapped out by LMA and other community organizations through the Great Barrington Trails and Greenways initiative. The conservation forest project promotes exploration of the diverse landscape features of this town property and provides a means for residents to access Lake Mansfield by bike or on foot. When complete, the trail will provide safe pedestrian access to a well-used town park and offer new recreational trails in support of community health, fitness and environmental education. Access to the developing trail is located at the back of the beach parking area. For more information, go to www.gbtrails.org.



Ron and George set footings



Peter S. Jensen, Trail Planner/Builder, P.O. Box 316, Gt. Barr. MA 01230

Who's Who in this Alphabet Stew?

LMA?

Lake Mansfield Alliance, is your community grassroots organization whose mission is to work to preserve, protect and enhance Lake Mansfield as a vital habitat and community resource. LMA is a project of GBLC. www.lakemansfield.org

GBLC?

Great Barrington Land Conservancy is dedicated to preserving and enhancing the community's natural resources and distinctive character. GBLC provides LMA with its nonprofit status. www.greatbarringtonlandconservancy.org

LMITF?

Lake Mansfield Improvement Task Force, is a town task force, appointed by the Select Board and assigned to develop and implement a Lake Mansfield Improvement Plan. Members represent the Board of Selectmen, Parks and Recreation Commission, Conservation Commission, Planning Board, Department of Public Works, and LMA.

LMCF Trails?

Lake Mansfield Conservation Forest Trails are the trails being developed in the forest east of the Lake Mansfield beach parking lot. The project is funded by local and state grants, the town of Great Barrington and LMA. It was designed by Peter Jensen and fueled by hours of volunteer labor.

GBTrails?

Great Barrington Trails and Greenways is a collaborative of natural resource, community, health and historical organizations, working to develop a town-wide system of interconnected trails and to promote active community exploration and stewardship. www.gbtrails.org

Naturalist Notes: Bobcats

Jesse Rogers, age 11



© Susan C. Morse

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I am writing about bobcats because there have been a lot of recent bobcat sightings in the area, and it seems people should have information about them. Bobcats are the most common wildcat in North America. Their range spreads through most of the USA, from southern Canada to northern Mexico. There are about 725,000 to 1,070,000 bobcats in the wild. Their numbers have declined slightly, but people are doing their best to bring them back. The bobcat can weigh 16-28 pounds for males and 10-18 pounds for females. Their height is about 17-23 inches. Their length is about 25-41 inches, and they live 12-13 years. Bobcats and their cousin, the lynx, are very similar except the lynx is slightly bigger. A bobcat's appearance varies, from shades of beige or brown fur with spotted or lined markings in brown or black.

A bobcat's diet consists mostly of rabbits, hares and rodents. Bobcats also eat birds, bats, adult deer, and also various farm animals, such as lambs and pigs. A bobcat's habitat ranges from forests and mountains to semi-desert and brush land. A habitat with vegetation and a lot of prey is ideal. Bobcats are usually solitary animals. Females never share their territo-

ries, but male territories tend to overlap. The size of territories is 25-30 miles for males and 5 miles for females. Bobcats have different kinds of dens, but they are usually caves, hollow logs, or rock ledges. There are two kinds of dens, the main den and the auxiliary den, which is usually a brush pile or tree stump. Bobcats mate in late winter, with their litter consisting of 1-6 kittens. Their gestation period is 50-70 days, and the kittens are born in the spring.

I have always been interested in wildlife, such as bobcats and their kin. I think they are amazing animals in many ways. It is exciting to know these animals live so close to us. Mr. Ron Dlugosz, who lives near Lake Mansfield, has seen 4 bobcats in his yard in the last 5 years. "One just walked down the driveway and stopped in front of the house, about 20 feet from my front door," he said. "We just looked at each other for quite awhile. I was amazed at how muscular and powerful it looked. Another ran down the driveway, while deer scampered into the woods. My wife, Sharon, saw it run up a tree without even breaking stride." I think we are very lucky to see the hint of a bobcat's life. I feel as if we share their world. That is why I wrote about the bobcats.

Connections

BY THE WAY

Take the one that meanders through the town
or the one that winds up by the lake
where colors of reflection
encircle and join;
Sight one barely
where pocked dirt roads are quilted now
with luscious leaves;

Trod the way and trace the old stone wall
Set your step on the footpaths of the Fall
Quickly now
before your heart is lost to mundane care
Perhaps there'll never be
another day like this
until next year !

Trod the way and trace the old stone wall
Set your step on the footpaths of the fall-

Ruth Heuberger

*S*waddled from head to toe, the wind biting at your nose, you drop your skis. Clack, one foot steps in, clack, the other. You are a baby colt testing unstable legs. Your body tenses; your white fingers grip the poles. You focus the breath, relaxing the shoulders, dropping the hips. Dig your toe in and shove. A shaky glide, track spreads out before you. You focus, hips dropped, shoulders relaxed. Again: push and glide, push and glide, push and glide. A rhythm forms, old as monks chanting in faraway mountains. The breath slows. The mind soars. You leave behind everything, a bread crumb trail of mittens, scarves.

Hannah Ward

Falling Water

One day last summer our family had an unexpected and unforgettable experience on Lake Mansfield. We were driving by the boat launch and saw the firemen spraying their hoses into the lake. We thought it might be fun to launch our kayaks to see the action close up. We drove home, ran down our backyard and climbed into our two kayaks. Garret and Mom were in the big red kayak, and Jackson was in the yellow one. We paddled over to the huge spray of water and stopped to watch for awhile. Next, we decided to get wet. We paddled closer and closer and crossed right under the falling water. We got drenched. We wondered if the firemen would mind if we used the spray to cool off, but when the firemen began to wave and cheer us on, we knew that they didn't mind at all. We went back and forth under the spray, laughing and yelling a bit from the shock of the cold water. People driving by stopped to watch us have our fun. Cold and wet, we paddled home. It was an evening on the lake we'll never forget. You just never know what kind of fun you'll have at Lake Mansfield.

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Garrett and Jackson Happ, ages 10 and 11.

Cross-Lake Swimmers

Betsy McTiernan

Open water swimming has been the one constant in my life for more than 30 years. I've changed jobs, homes, and partners. I've had bad years and good. But I always swim. It's the closest I can come to feeling weightless. Like a hawk riding a thermal, I pull myself forward, surveying the land below—plants, fish, inky dark and rays of light—then flip over to watch the clouds. I'm at home in water.

I took my first swim in Lake Mansfield in 2005. I walked into the roped-off area, picked my way around the splashing kids and dove under the rope. After a few strokes I propelled myself into a dense clump of weeds. I paddled around it and a few others before I made it across. Along the way, I enjoyed watching the fish, frightened by my shadow, dart into the waving grasses.

6 I also observed low-growing weeds that I assumed were native, and tall, dense clumps that I assumed were not.

Since then I have learned that Eurasian milfoil, the swimmer's enemy, has its own enemy, a weevil. *Euhrychiopsis lecontei* was stocked in the lake in '95/'98, and 2000 to control the growth of this lake-choking invasive. According to the most recent study, conducted in 2005, the approach is working. Though milfoil growth increased from 2001 to 2005, many of the plants were in poor condition. Also, where the milfoil dominated, weevils were present. This finding was good news for us swimmers and better news for the lake.

Now, when I hear "Think global but act local," Lake Mansfield comes to mind. As a newcomer, I am grateful to the first group of caretakers, Lake Mansfield Association, and especially to Betty Vigneron for promoting the weevil approach. Given that only 0.1% of Earth's fresh water is found on the surface, we all need to be stewards of the fresh water in our neighborhoods.

I asked a couple of other cross-lake swimmers what Lake Mansfield means to them. From Dale Abrams I learned that the Master's swim team at Simon's Rock inaugurates its open water season in the lake, sometimes as early as Father's Day. "The water is usually warm and weed-free for the first two months. It's a treat to be in warm water so early in the season, and that's a real advantage of smaller lakes."

Like me, Jenny Clark is a lone swimmer. She wrote, "Come June there is nothing—NOTHING—like pulling out from the beach area, with my tethered noodle in tow, and wending my way around a few willowy weeds, easy enough, and hitting my stride mid-lake. The still, the calm, the sky, the quiet, the flow, the sound of my breath melting away, all bring me back to the nature of water and the pleasure of it on my skin. My strokes can lead me anywhere with no walls or ropes to guide me. June, July, August—but sublime September is the best. Nine months is a long time to wait to get back in the water!" Swimmers who want to meet and swim, contact me at J@JenniferClark.com.



Q & A: Aquatic Plants & Water Quality

Nina Evans & Christine Ward

What are the major sources of pollution in Lake Mansfield, and what can we do about them?

A lake's water quality reflects what is happening in its surrounding watershed. There are two major pollution sources: bacterial contaminants (introduced by animals and people) and nonpoint source (NPS) pollution. Nonpoint source pollution occurs when water (stormwater, snowmelt, water from a garden hose) flows through the watershed, picking up pollutants and depositing them into water resources. Common types of NPS pollutants include phosphorus and nitrogen in lawn and garden fertilizers, pet waste, phosphorus and bacteria from septic systems, oil and grease from parking lots, and sediment from construction activities and soil erosion.

The good news is that bacterial contamination has not been a significant problem at the lake. Under the direction of the town's Health Officer, the lake's water is tested weekly throughout the swimming season for coliform bacterial contaminants with consistently satisfactory results. However, nonpoint source pollution is a much more serious issue, with extensive runoff flowing directly into the lake at the boat launch, across Lake Mansfield Road, and over the parking area. The combined effect of NPS pollutants results in degraded water quality as well as loss of recreational use and wildlife habitat. Excessive nutrients stimulate algal and plant growth. Sediment can cause serious damage to the lake by causing turbidity and filling in sensitive habitat. NPS pollution is best controlled by encouraging filtration and by controlling sediment. Fortunately, the Clean Water Act of 1987, Section 319, established a national program of grants to control nonpoint sources

of pollution. The Lake Mansfield Improvement Task Force is working with our Town Planner to prepare a proposal for a Section 319 grant which could provide significant funding for dramatic improvements in the Lake Mansfield watershed area.

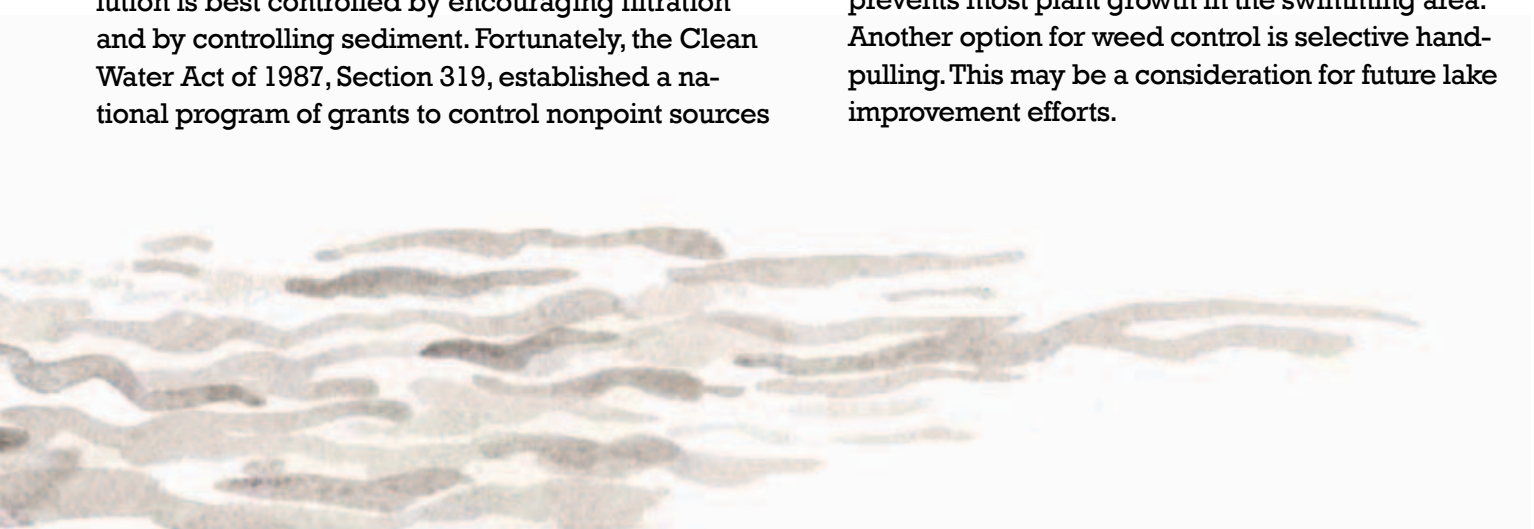
Aside from the runoff, why can't the lake be more like a swimming pool, clear and weed-free?

There are just two kinds of clear weed-free lakes. The first are very deep rain-fed ponds like Cape Cod's glacier-formed "kettle ponds" or Maine's quarry ponds. Their depth is so great that light cannot penetrate to stimulate weed growth except around the shallow perimeter. Also, their tiny watersheds bring in minimal nonpoint source pollutants, like nitrogen-rich fertilizers. Other weed-free lakes, are dead lakes, poisoned by acid rain, devoid of fish, amphibians, birds and other larger predators. A healthy lake with a nicely balanced ecosystem, like Lake Mansfield, will be a rich habitat, with a variety of plants (a.k.a. "weeds") providing food and shelter to small fauna which in turn feed larger predators, like blue herons and fishermen.

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Fine for the rest of the lake, but how can we control weeds in the swimming area?

Other ponds are treated with poisons or with very expensive dredgings or water draw-downs. At Lake Mansfield weed blankets are installed each summer on the bottom of the swimming area. This safe and relatively inexpensive method blocks light and prevents most plant growth in the swimming area. Another option for weed control is selective hand-pulling. This may be a consideration for future lake improvement efforts.



2008 Stewardship Volunteers

LMA provides a variety of volunteer opportunities throughout the year. Here is a sampling of the good work shared by many:



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2008 Lake Mansfield Alliance
Great Barrington Parks Commission
Great Barrington Rotary
Great Barrington Garden Club
Appalachian Mountain Club
Berkshire Community College
Environmental Studies



Featured Volunteers

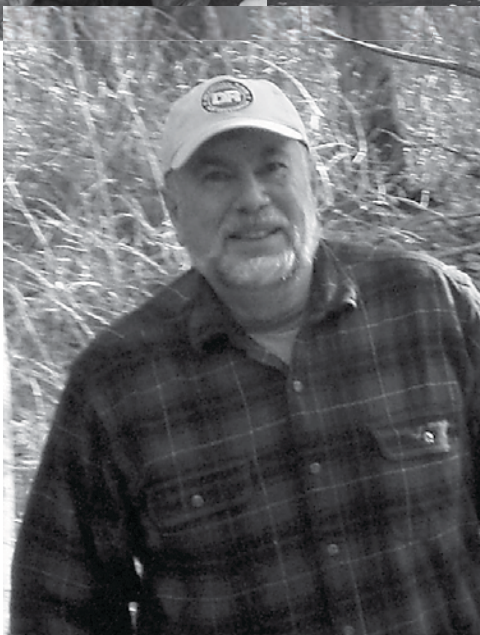
Matt Moore, Regional Trails Coordinator for the Appalachian Mountain Club, has dedicated hours of expertise to the developing Lake Mansfield Conservation Forest Trail System. This season Matt is extending his help to Great Barrington Trails and Greenway by beginning the coordination of a town-wide system of resource volunteers. Matt has several trail builder training sessions and work events planned for spring and summer 2009. To learn more, go to www.gbtrails.org or contact Matt at (413) 528-8003 or mjmoore@outdoors.org.



George Guerrero gets a little annoyed if work happens without him. Whether it's a clean-up, fence project or trail building day, George is there and eager to help out. Originally from Ecuador, we've been fortunate to have George helping in Great Barrington for over 30 years, bringing his joyful community spirit to even the most challenging work projects.



Ron Dlugosz has served LMA as an active steering committee member and events volunteer for 5 years. He and his wife, Sharon, have logged over 65 working hours on the Lake Mansfield Conservation Forest Trails. Ron has also put in countless meeting hours on behalf of Lake Mansfield Improvements. "Thanks, Ron. Happy fishing this spring and summer."



Betsy McTiernan, Bill Allen and Ruth Heuberger (not pictured), have rolled up their sleeves to support LMA. Ruth is reorganizing and revitalizing our mail and email lists. Betsy has taken on the editing challenge of our LMA Newsletter, and Bill is helping with his formatting expertise. All this energy is what keeps LMA alive and engaged. Many thanks to these and all of our wonderful LMA Volunteers!

Help us save resources:
Join our LMA email group.
Go to lakemansfield@gmail.com
and let us know that you want to receive email updates on LMA events

2008 Financial Report

Lake Mansfield Alliance Treasurer's Report

Fiscal year: 4.5.08 – 3.27.08

Income

Donations/Memberships	\$ 2,005.00
Cabin Fever Dinner	2,168.73
Total Income:	\$ 4,173.73

Expenses

Fees (Accounting)	\$ 22.50
Professional Dues	80.00
Postage & PO Box	297.10
Printing (Newsletter, post cards, posters, Improvement plan)	748.29
Supplies	269.62
Project Costs (Welcome Sign/display side & Trash/recycle containers)	2,025.93

Total Expenses: \$ 3,443.15

Annual Net Profit: \$ 730.58

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In addition to our regular LMA work, \$8,750.13 of grant funding has been expended on our Lake Mansfield Conservation Forest Trail Project. This spending has been matched by over 400 volunteer work hours valued at \$7,228.50.



Our status as a project of Great Barrington Land Conservancy (GBLC) has greatly supported our efforts. GBLC is a vehical for preserving and enhancing our community's natural resources and distinctive charter.

greatbarringtonlandconservancy.org

To help us make the most of our LMA Newsletter expenditure we hope you:
Read, enjoy and PASS IT ALONG

Join us some Thursday evening



Join other paddlers in an exploration of Lake Mansfield. We will meet at the Lake Mansfield Boat launch at 6 pm on the last Thursday of each month (weather permitting) from

June through September. Please paddle responsibly and have approved life vests for everyone. This is particularly important if young children are aboard.

For more information, contact Ron Dlugosz, ronforgb@yahoo.com, 528-0956

Artist Profile: Michael McCurdy

Suzi Banks Baum

Of all the jewels in Great Barrington, Michael is surely one. He is a well-decorated artist of wood engravings and printmaking as well as a writer and publisher. When the LMA was taking its current shape, we knew we needed a logo. Michael agreed to provide us with a piece of his original art work.

In the 2004 printing of *Walden*, by Shambhala Publications, the illustrations by Michael could have been about Lake Mansfield. You can immediately sense the texture of the water as Thoreau rows across the pond. You can feel the bark of the trees and the grit of the soil in front of Thoreau's stoop as if you yourself had been sitting there with him, taking in the view. Perhaps that is the beauty of Michael's work: he takes you right into the scene of the story—whether it is about the white pines of the ancient forests of our indigenous land, the sailing ships of long ago or ducks floating on a serene pond. Looking at his work, you are placed in the center of the tale.

That is why our logo (opposite page upper right) so aptly stands for our dear Lake Mansfield. Whether you can identify that duck or not,

you have stood on the side of the lake and seen that view, held the evening light as you listened to the peepers, or enjoyed the splash of color across a fall afternoon, Michael's work takes you right into the center of it.

Michael and Deborah raised their family on Lake Buel Road. They lived there for 26 years, exploring the "neolithic" swamps at the north end of Lake Buel and becoming important fibers of our community. Michael is an avid hiker. He favors the traipsing grounds of his heroes, Nathaniel Hawthorne and Henry David Thoreau, including Monument Mountain, the site of the fabled hike of the trio of Hawthorne, Herman Melville and Oliver Wendell Holmes.

Since last August, the McCurdy's have relocated to Springfield. They are an hour closer to their children who live in Medford and part of a community that can provide support for Michael. He has Parkinson's disease. Not surprisingly, the disease has dimmed neither his charm nor his humor. I urge you to go to the library to find more of Michael's work or to his web site www.michaelmccurdy.com. You will be amazed and inspired by what you see there.

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Become a Member of Lake Mansfield Alliance 2009

Name

Address

City/State/Zip

Phone

Email

Suggested annual dues

I wish to remain an anonymous donor.

\$20 Individual

\$35 Family

\$50 Supporter

\$100 Conservationist

\$250 Guardian

\$500 Steward

\$___ Trail Project Dedicated Donation

\$___ other

Make tax deductible donations to: GBLC Lake Mansfield Fund, LMA, PO Box 944, Great Barrington, MA 01230

In addition to my membership, I would like to volunteer to help with:

Lake Mansfield Fundraisers

LMA Steering Committee

(Cabin Fever Dinner & others)

(meets monthly to plan events and direct LMA efforts)

Trail Building Team: Lake Mansfield Conservation Forest

LMA Communications

Lake Mansfield Spring Celebration & Clean-up Day Sunday May 3, 2009



11:00 ~ 3:00

(Rain Date: Sat. May 9th)

11-12:30 Clean-up:

Meet at the Beach, gloves recommended.
Bring tools: rakes, wheelbarrows, wagons ...
and enthusiasm!

12:30 – 3:00 Potluck Lunch

Community Meeting, Kayaking and
Guided Trail Walk: Lake Mansfield Conservation Forest Trails

Kayaks Courtesy of



Join your friends and neighbors for a fun day of community action!

“Working to preserve, protect and enhance Lake Mansfield as a vital natural habitat and community resource.”
See page 1 for 2009 Lake Mansfield events & LMA Newsletter. ENJOY, and PASS IT ALONG ..

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